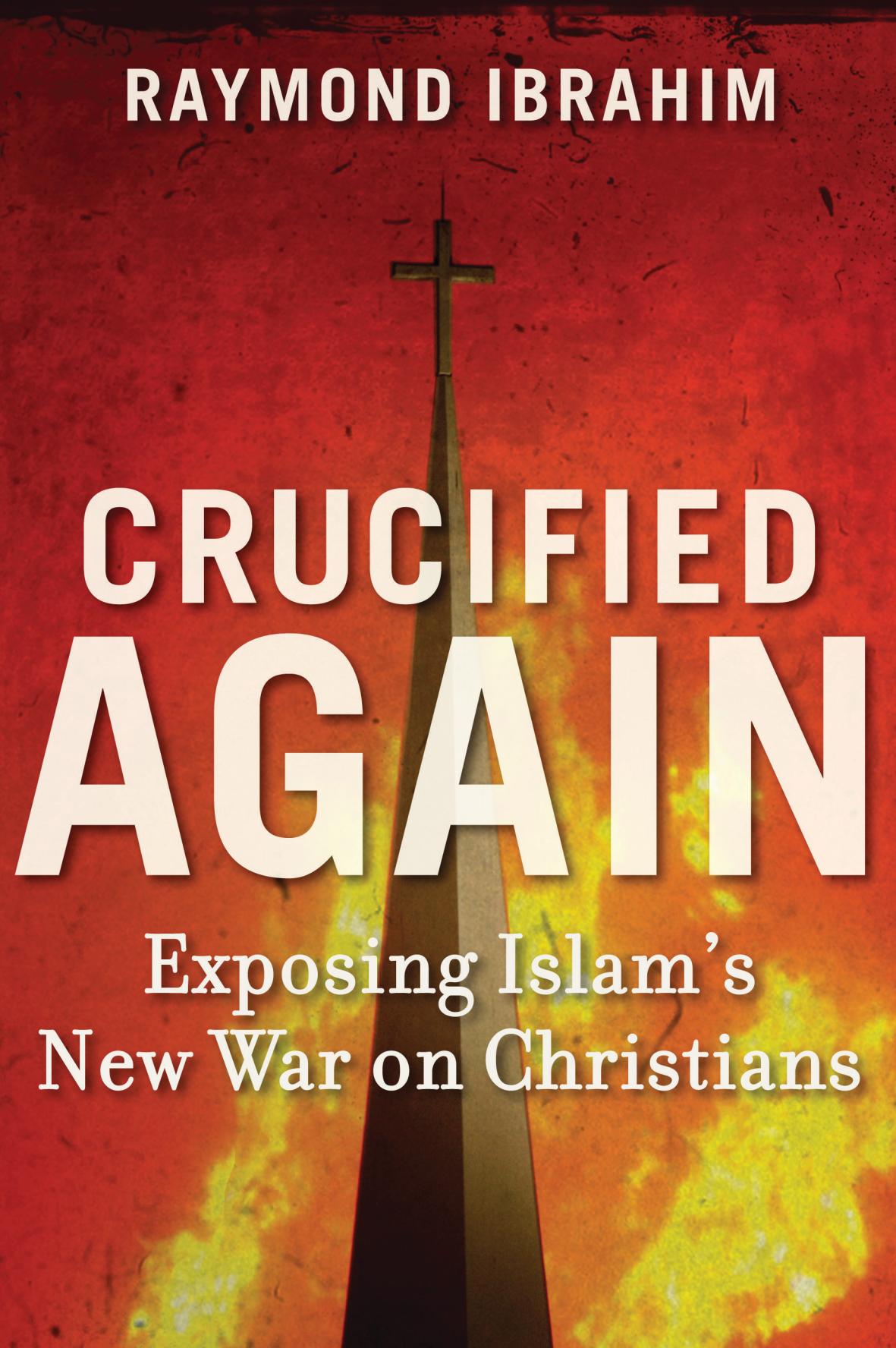


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RAYMOND IBRAHIM



CRUCIFIED AGAIN

Exposing Islam's
New War on Christians

CRUCIFIED AGAIN

“Systematic oppression of Christians in the Islamic world is as little reported on as it is increasingly widespread. Yet to document the ongoing tragedy requires fluency in Arabic, familiarity with the Middle East, and a courage to report what is often denied abroad and felt better left unsaid at home. Raymond Ibrahim has both the skills and commitment to enlighten the world about oppression and intolerance in this much need exposé—characterized by scholarship, prodigious research, and a commitment to the truth.”

—Victor Davis Hanson, senior fellow, classics and military history, the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and author, *Carnage and Culture*

“The great unspoken civil rights issue of our day is sharia—how its suffocating laws and the supremacist culture it breeds are incompatible with the Western ideals of liberty and the equal dignity of every human life. The great unspoken scandal of our day is the brutality with which this incompatibility manifests itself, from Morocco across to Indonesia, from Turkey down to sub-Saharan Africa, in the Muslim slaughter of Christian populations. Only the spotlight of faithful, tireless reporting can shame us into speaking about, and ending, the slaughter. On that score, no one is more faithful, more tireless, and more valuable than Raymond Ibrahim. This is an essential book.”

—Andrew C. McCarthy, executive director of the Philadelphia Freedom Center, contributing editor of *National Review*, and bestselling author of *Willful Blindness*, *The Grand Jihad*, and *Spring Fever: The Illusion of Islamic Democracy*

“The most aggressive force in the world today is the Islamic movement to subdue and then outlaw rival creeds, including those that are secular. Most people assume the primary targets of Islamic supremacists are Jews. Raymond Ibrahim’s indispensable book shows that they are Christians and democrats as well.”

—David Horowitz, founding president of the David Horowitz Freedom Center and editor of FrontPage Magazine

“Raymond Ibrahim eloquently, relentlessly highlights a topic of the greatest urgency but only passingly noted and generally ignored in polite society: rampant Muslim (and not just Islamist) jihadi aggression these days against all that is Christian—crosses, holidays, churches, beliefs, and believers. He documents how Muslims, drawing ultimately on medieval sources, mistreat Christians ‘from Morocco in the

west to Indonesia in the east, from Turkey in the north, to sub-Saharan Africa in the south.’ Ibrahim then convincingly explains why Western academics, journalists, and politicians tend to skip over these systematic human rights abuses by portraying them as anomalies to a ‘rule of tolerance that is presumed to prevail in Islam.’ He concludes by warning of the potential threat jihad poses to every non-Muslim. We are in Ibrahim’s debt both for his research and for marshalling it to great effect.”

—Daniel Pipes, president, Middle East Forum

“Raymond Ibrahim is one of the very few writers on the scene today who has the courage, knowledge, and insight to be able to expose not only what is happening to Christians in Muslim lands, but why it is happening—despite the desperate attempts of politically correct Leftist enablers of the global jihad to obscure both of those things. This book reveals a scandal of astounding proportions: the persecution itself, as well as the silence and complacency of the international human rights community in the face of that persecution. Every UN official should be told that U.S. funding will be withdrawn from that woebegone organization unless and until this book is read and heeded.”

—Robert Spencer, author of the *New York Times* bestsellers
The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)
and *The Truth about Muhammad*

“Take the blinders off and the earplugs out and read Raymond Ibrahim’s timely and explosive exposé to find out what the media won’t tell you: that Christians are suffering, dying, and disappearing across what we now think of as the Islamic world, and why. There is no sharper student of the current Arab scene than Ibrahim, whose fluency in Arabic and understanding of Islamic law and culture endow his analysis of this specifically Islamic assault on religious freedom with essential context and historical perspective.”

—Diana West, nationally syndicated columnist and author of
The Death of the Grown-Up and *American Betrayal:*
The Secret Assault on Our Nation’s Character

“The phenomenon of religious persecution has been a feature of medieval times on both sides of the Mediterranean and plagued Europe until popular revolutions established the concept of secular and pluralist state in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately the Greater Middle East and North Africa, particularly under Islamist regimes, witnessed a continued suppression of Muslim liberals, of all minorities in general, and of Christian minorities in particular till our current days. From the Copts

of Egypt to the Assyro-Chaldeans of Iraq, from Iran to Lebanon, various Christian communities—Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants—traversed tragic decades of legal, political, and psychological discrimination. Raymond Ibrahim, a former researcher at the Library of Congress and the author of *The Al Qaeda Reader*, has been a prolific writer on Middle East Christian affairs. In this book he expands the analysis of the roots and bases of persecution. A necessary read that links Jihadism to human rights abuse.”

—Walid Phares, visiting fellow at the European Foundation for Democracy
and author of *The War of Ideas: Jihadism against Democracy*

“In *Crucified Again*, Raymond Ibrahim exposes Islam’s dirty little secret of utter intolerance and persecution of Christians and its inability to co-exist with other faiths. Ibrahim, an American-born son of Christian immigrants from the Middle East, is clearly committed to be the voice of the voiceless Christians living under the wickedness of Islamic tyranny.”

—Nonie Darwish, director of Former Muslims United and author of *Now They Call Me Infidel*, *Cruel and Unusual Punishment*,
and *The Devil We Don’t Know*

“Raymond Ibrahim knows the Islamic world well and is one of the few reporters courageous enough to tell the story of the global persecution of Christians by radical Islamists. The English-speaking world needs to know what Raymond Ibrahim has to report, and Christian readers need to pray and speak up for the victims whose stories he tells with such passion and verve.”

—David Alton, Lord Alton of Liverpool, member of parliament

“If you want to know what’s really happening in the Muslim world, there’s one man to turn to: Raymond Ibrahim. As a Christian, he takes a special interest in reporting the great unreported story of our time, the brutal persecution of Christians by Muslims across the world. *Crucified Again* is a stunning and revelatory book that should be in the hands of every congressman, everyone at the State Department, and every member of the National Security Council—not to mention in the hands of every reader who cares about Islamist aggression, human rights, and the survival of Christians in the Holy Land and elsewhere.”

—Steven Emerson, executive director of the Investigative Project
on Terrorism, author of numerous books, and director of the
award-winning documentary *Jihad in America*

“*Crucified Again* masterfully ‘joins the dots’ of persecution of Christians at the hands of their Muslim neighbors. Raymond Ibrahim’s politically incorrect but irrefutable conclusion is that Islam itself is the root cause of an aggressively advancing global epidemic of human pain and suffering. This book is a wake-up call for the West, and a courageous act of compassion for Islam’s victims.”

—Mark Durie, Anglican pastor, theologian, and human rights activist

“The mainstream media might ignore the persecution of Christians around the world—but Raymond Ibrahim does not. An American Christian of Egyptian Coptic ancestry, fluent in Arabic, he exposes one of the most tragic under-told stories of our time: how Christians are being murdered or driven from their churches and their homes by Islamists. I urge every Christian who cares about his fellow Christians in Islamic parts of the world to read this incredibly important book.”

—Pat Robertson, bestselling author, host of the *700 Club*,
chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network,
and founder and chancellor of Regent University

“At a time when the Western media obsess over the slightest insult to Muslims, Raymond Ibrahim exposes the extensive Muslim persecution of Christians all across the Islamic world, an epidemic of violence and murder ignored by Western reporters and enabled by a foreign policy of appeasement. In addition to exhaustively documenting this outbreak of religious violence, Ibrahim shows how it is consistent with traditional Islamic supremacist theology and laws that justify violence against infidels, apostates, and proselytes. Meticulously researched and passionately written, Ibrahim’s book is a must-read for all concerned about the future of Christianity and the wages of a misguided foreign policy.”

—Bruce S. Thornton, research fellow at Stanford University’s
Hoover Institution and author of *The Wages of Appeasement*

**CRUCIFIED
AGAIN**

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Exposing Islam's
New War on Christians

RAYMOND IBRAHIM

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First ebook edition © 2013

eISBN 978-1-62157-026-4

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition as follows:

ISBN 978-1-62157-025-7



Published in the United States by
Regnery Publishing, Inc.
One Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001
www.Regnery.com



In cooperation with
the Gatestone Institute
14 East 60th Street
New York, NY 10022
www.GatestoneInstitute.org

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Books are available in quantity for promotional or premium use. Write to Director of Special Sales, Regnery Publishing, Inc., One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001, for information on discounts and terms or call (202) 216-0600.

Distributed to the trade by

Perseus Distribution

250 West 57th Street

New York, NY 10107

To M.M.—He who arises in Might

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“To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

—Hebrews 6:6



A NOTE TO THE READER

This book covers the persecution of Christians across the Islamic world. We will be examining recent incidents from across a wide geographical spread, from Morocco to Nigeria to Indonesia—and even sometimes in Western Europe and North America. We will also be delving back into the past to consider the treatment of Christians under Muslim rule from the time of the earliest Islamic conquests. But rather than dividing this material by continent or century, I have organized the evidence thematically, to demonstrate the continuity and interconnectivity of Christian persecution under Islam.

Christians are being persecuted in Muslim countries today for the same reasons as in past centuries. And the patterns of persecution—the same motivations, the same actions, and the same horrific results—recur in countries as different as Kenya and Denmark. Those patterns, I will demonstrate, emerge from themes in the Koran, in Islamic theology, in Sharia law, and in Islamic culture. Along the way, we will be looking at

Muslim doctrines concerning Christians and Christianity and primary historical texts from the early centuries of Islam, as well as at the situation of today's Christian populations from one end of the Muslim world to the other.

The continuity that is observable in Muslim mistreatment of Christians—by Muslims of different nations, races, languages, and cultures; from Morocco in the west to Indonesia in the east, and from Turkey in the north to sub-Saharan Africa to the south; in “white,” “yellow,” “brown,” and “black” nations—makes it clear that one thing alone accounts for such identical patterns in such otherwise diverse nations: Islam itself—whether the strict application of its Sharia, or the supremacist culture born of it. No economic, political, or ethnic cause for the violence is relevant to all these widely divergent settings.

After reading what follows, however, the discerning reader may ask, “If Muslim persecution of Christians is ubiquitous in the Muslim world, if it is intrinsic to Islam, why is it that some Muslim countries figure much more prominently in this book than others?” Indeed, some of the more “moderate” Muslim nations, such as Indonesia, see many more incidents of horrific anti-Christian violence than nations well known to be radical, such as Afghanistan. Does not this incongruity suggest that Christian persecution is not a product of Islamic doctrine and culture but of secular factors such as race or economic problems?

The answer to this conundrum is in the numbers—comparative numbers of Muslims and Christians, that is. The ratio of Muslims to Christians in any given country—or, looking at it another way, the proximity of Christians and Muslims—is the primary factor explaining which countries see the most and the least Christian persecution. For example, Saudi Arabia, which is vehemently anti-Christian, generates fewer incidents of persecution than some Muslim nations that are generally deemed moderate. The reason for this is simple: Saudi Arabia has nipped the problem in the bud by banning Christianity altogether; there are no churches to bomb or burn. Likewise, the ravages of the historic jihad have exterminated or nearly exterminated Christian populations throughout the Muslim world. For example, the whole of North Africa, prior to the Islamic conquests, was Christian—it gave the world St. Augustine,

the giant of theology who played a major role in articulating Western Christianity. But today there are virtually no Christians left to persecute from Morocco to Libya. Christians now make up less than 1 percent of that entire population.

On the other hand, the very large numbers of Christians in Egypt—according to the baptismal records of the Coptic Orthodox Church, there are some 16 million Christian Copts in Egypt¹—prompt regular bursts of anti-Christian persecution. Indeed, as one of the oldest and largest Muslim nations, with one of the oldest and largest Christian populations, Egypt is a kind of paradigm of Islam’s treatment of Christians—both in the present and going back more than thirteen centuries. Accordingly, it figures prominently in this book.

In sub-Saharan countries where Christians often make up half or even more than half of the entire population, persecution gives way to genocidal jihads as Muslims in these countries try to purge their lands of any trace of the “infidel.” Nigeria, for example, is experiencing appalling violence; the accounts of persecution included in this book are only the tip of the iceberg of Christian suffering in Africa. Of course, wherever and whenever Christians are killed or driven out there will be less persecution there—simply because there will be fewer and fewer Christians to target, as nations that used to have significant Christian populations slowly become more like Saudi Arabia: infidel-free and thus ostensibly “peaceful.” This may be the future of Iraq, whose small Christian population has shrunk dramatically as a result of the jihad there. In Nigeria, where Christians make up nearly half the population, we are being offered a rare glimpse of early Islamic history repeating itself, as Muslims use violence to subjugate or kill very large numbers of non-Muslims in the name of Islam and through jihad. That is the true story of Islam’s spread from Arabia.

Even in the West, the numbers theory—that anti-infidel intolerance is predicated on the Muslim-to-non-Muslim ratio—holds up. The Muslims of the United States are relatively nonviolent, but they amount to less than 1 percent of the entire population. It is a different story in Europe, where there are much larger percentages of Muslims. France, which has the largest Muslim population in Western Europe, also seems

to see the largest amount of Muslim intolerance for Christians and their churches.

A note on sources: Major media in the West (network and cable news, the Associated Press, *New York Times*, the BBC, and so forth) cover some of the most spectacular instances of Christian persecution—for example, church bombings that leave dozens (as opposed to only a few people) dead. But many daily run-of-the-mill incidents of persecution are never reported by those sources. Moreover, even when stories are reported, the facts are often articulated in a way that minimizes the religious element of the persecution—to conform to the secular script of the Western mainstream media, which is largely blind to the influence of religion in current events.

One must look elsewhere for the full picture. Fortunately there are a number of alternative media outlets and human rights organizations that report on the sufferings of Christians around the world. Most of these are little known. However, after following their work for years and becoming acquainted with several of their journalists around the Muslim world, I can testify that their work is first-rate. World Watch Monitor (formerly Compass Direct News), the media component of Open Doors, is one of the most authoritative sources on the sufferings of Christians, with reporters spread out around the world. So is International Christian Concern. There are also local news services that offer good coverage of certain regions. For the Near East, Egypt in particular, the Assyrian International News Agency is a good source for objective reports (most of which are easily verified by comparison with open Arabic sources). Readers are encouraged to follow the endnotes to the many anecdotes listed in this book for links to some of the most reliable English-language websites covering Christian persecution around the world.

Even so, a great many instances of persecution simply never make it onto any English-language media at all. There are just too many incidents to keep up with—not to mention that some nations are especially inhospitable to Western journalists. On top of that, many Western journalists are at best uninterested in Muslim persecution of Christians. Even some big stories widely reported in the Muslim world never make it into English. For example, it was left to me to first translate and disseminate the

assertion by Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti that it is "necessary to destroy all the churches" in the Arabian Peninsula.²

I routinely get my stories straight from the source. I follow the Arabic-language media and can often verify stories via my many contacts and colleagues in the Middle East. Many of the reports that appear in this book—including the entire section on the Maspero Massacre, which initially was woefully misreported by the Western media—were identified, verified, and translated by me directly from Arabic sources. In many cases I have augmented reports appearing in Western media with more information and details from Arabic media as well as providing fresh translations of some important doctrinal and historical texts.

The fact is that knowledge of Arabic opens a new world of information concerning such important and strategic nations as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. Readers are encouraged to visit my website, RaymondIbrahim.com, where I regularly translate breaking news from the Arab world—not just on Christian persecution but on Islamic affairs in general—and put it in context. I also maintain a "Muslim Persecution of Christians" tab on my website and produce a monthly report by the same name, which offers the very latest news on the sufferings of Christians under Islam, most of it reported only in alternate and foreign media.

A final question remains to be addressed: Why focus on *Muslim* persecution of Christians? After all, Christians are being persecuted around the entire world—in North Korea, for example—and not just in the Islamic world. Why focus exclusively on the sufferings of Christians under Islam? The fact is, while it is true that Christians are also being persecuted in non-Muslim countries, the lion's share of the persecution happens in Muslim countries. But there is another important point: Muslim persecution is much more existential and deeply rooted in Muslim societies. The persecution of Christians in other, mostly communist, nations is very real. It should never be minimized. But the overthrow of, say, the North Korean regime could well end the persecution of Christians there almost overnight—just as the fall of the Soviet Union saw Christians' persecution come to a quick close in Russia. This is because the persecution of Christians in non-Muslim nations is almost always

rooted in a secular ideology and tied to a particular political regime. On the other hand, Muslim persecution of Christians is perennial; it transcends any one regime. It is part and parcel of the Islamic religion and the civilization born of it—hence its tenacity. Thus the persecution of Christians in the Muslim world is not only a widespread phenomenon that has horrific effects on large numbers of human beings across the globe; it is also a discrete phenomenon, deserving of attention in its own right.



PART ONE

LOST HISTORY

At this moment, from one end of the Muslim world to the other, Christians are being persecuted. A January 2012 Reuters report cited an estimated “100 million Christians persecuted worldwide.”¹ A few years earlier the British Secret Service, M-16, had put the number of Christians being persecuted around the world at twice as high, 200 million.² A human rights representative for the Organization for Security and Cooperation on Europe estimates that a Christian is killed for his faith “every five minutes.”³

The vast majority of those martyrs are being killed in the Islamic world. Eight of the top nine offending countries—Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Maldives, Mali, Iran, and Yemen—have a majority of Muslims (the ninth, Eritrea, is roughly half-Muslim). Of the top fifty countries documented for their persecution of Christians, forty-two either are Muslim-majority nations or have a sizeable Muslim population that is attempting to subjugate or eliminate surrounding

Christians (Nigeria being the primary example of the latter pattern).⁴ The pages to come will be filled with a small selection of the overwhelming evidence.

From one end of the Muslim world to the other, Christians are suffering under the return of Sharia. Often translated as “Islamic law,” Sharia simply means the “Islamic way”⁵ of doing things. Accordingly, wherever and whenever Muslims are in power or getting more power, churches are outlawed, burned, and bombed, while Bibles and crucifixes are confiscated and destroyed. Freedom of speech—to speak positively of Christianity or critically of Islam—is denied, often on pain of death. Born Muslims who wish to convert to Christianity out of sincere religious conviction are denied this basic freedom, also on pain of death. Christians are deemed to be less than second-class citizens by many Muslim governments and Muslim populations. They cannot get justice against their Muslim oppressors. Christian women and children are routinely abducted, raped, and forced to convert to Islam. Increasingly, Christians are able to justify their very existence only by paying large amounts of ransom—money extorted in the name of “jihad,” Islam’s “holy war” to subjugate or eliminate non-Muslims.

Although Muslim persecution of Christians is one of the most dramatic stories of our times, it is also one of the least known in the West. Such ignorance was not always the case. Ironically, much of the material in this book that will be new to Western readers would have been old news to their European ancestors of centuries past. The exact patterns we see today in the Muslim persecution of Christians were quite familiar to Christians who lived in contact with the Muslim world in past centuries. There is a reason, however, why Muslim persecution of Christians is, in certain respects, “new,” and why Westerners are unable to acknowledge it. We will be able to understand the reality of the situation only if we grapple with a widespread misreading of history, particularly the history of the colonial era.

Tragically, a misunderstanding of the past has both exacerbated Muslim persecution of Christians and blinded the West to its scope and real causes.

MIGHT MAKES RIGHT

From its very beginnings, Islam's appeal was tied to its ability to offer its followers worldly success and prosperity. From Muslim prophet Muhammad's first successful caravan raid at Badr to the centuries of jihad conquests that followed, Islam was synonymous with power and success. From the seventh century to the nineteenth, Muslims were accustomed to being the victors.⁶ Up until that time, they saw in Christian Europe just another part of the world that in due time would also be conquered and annexed to Islam.

In just the first few decades of its existence, Islam had already conquered half of the Christian world's lands—including regions that were the backbone of early Christianity, such as Syria and Egypt—while Europe was continually besieged. In fact, Europe as we know it was forged in large measure by the Islamic conquests, which severed the Latin West from the Greek East, turning the once highly trafficked Mediterranean into a “Muslim Lake”—so that, in the words of medieval Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun, “the Christians could no longer float a plank upon the sea.”⁷ Thus, “the classic tradition was shattered,” writes historian Henri Pirenne, “because Islam had destroyed the ancient unity of the Mediterranean.”⁸

For centuries European Christians lived perpetually under threat of the Islamic conquest that had already forever changed the Mediterranean. Middle East historian Bernard Lewis writes,

For more than a thousand years, Europe, that is to say Christendom, was under constant threat of Islamic attack and conquest. If the Muslims were repelled in one region, they appeared in greater strength in another. As far away as Iceland, Christians still prayed in their churches for God to save them from the “terror of the Turk.” These fears were not unfounded, since in 1627 Muslim corsairs from North Africa raided their coasts and carried off four hundred captives, for sale in the slave market of Algiers.⁹

Then the unthinkable happened. In 1798, Napoleon Bonaparte, an infidel from Christendom, invaded and subjugated Egypt, the heart of the Islamic world, with barely a struggle. This crushing defeat was followed by any number of European powers conquering and colonizing much of the Muslim world. As a result, for the first time in history, Muslims questioned the superior strength of Islam and its power to fulfill their desires; for the first time in history, Muslims looked with awe and respect on the West.¹⁰ As a historian of the period put it, “Napoleon’s invasion introduced educated Egyptians to the ideas of the French Revolution,” which “generated a gnawing and uncomfortable feeling among them that the ‘umma’ [the Islamic community] was not as perfect or as strong as they had imagined. Such uncertainty was the basis of new ideas and conceptions.”¹¹

It was one thing to hold unhesitatingly to Islam and Sharia when Islam was conquering and subjugating non-Muslims, as it had done for well over a millennium. It was quite another thing for Muslims to remain confident in the Islamic way when the despised Christian infidels were conquering and subjugating the lands of Islam with great ease—displaying their superior weapons and technology, not to mention all the other perks of Western civilization. In the oft-quoted words of Osama bin Laden, “When people see a strong horse and a weak horse, by nature, they will like the strong horse.”¹²

For the first time Muslims, who for over a millennium had operated under the belief that might makes right and that Islam was the embodiment of might, began to emulate the West in everything from politics and government to everyday dress and etiquette. The Islamic way, the Sharia, was the old, failed way. To be successful and prosperous, one had to follow the West and its victorious way. Thus during the colonial era and into the mid-twentieth century, all things distinctly Islamic—from Islam’s clerics to the woman’s “hijab,” or headscarf—were increasingly seen by Muslims as relics of a backward age, to be shunned. Most “Muslims” were Muslim in name only.

One need only turn to the history of Turkey to demonstrate the intensity of the wholesale emulation of the West. In the early twentieth century,

Turkey abolished the Ottoman Empire, the final caliphate (or sultanate) of the Islamic world and disavowed its Islamic identity and heritage—even discarding the sacrosanct Arabic script for the Latin alphabet in order to be more European.¹³ Turkey went from being the standard-bearer of Islam and the epitome of Islamic supremacy and jihad for some five hundred years to being possibly the most Westernized Muslim nation in the world.

Turkey is known for modernization and Westernization under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. But the same trends that were at work in Turkey were also at work throughout much of the Muslim world. All of the popular Arab nationalist movements that appeared in the twentieth century were distinctly secular and Westernized, certainly in comparison with the religious rhetoric that prevailed in earlier times. As late as 1953, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser poked fun at the hijab and the Muslim Brotherhood on Egyptian national television in front of a packed live audience—to wild applause and laughter.¹⁴ In the 1950s, few Egyptian women wore the hijab.¹⁵ Today the majority of women in Egypt veil themselves. Those who do not wear the hijab—mostly Christians—are often harassed and even sexually assaulted in the streets.

THE CHRISTIAN GOLDEN AGE

One natural byproduct of Muslims Westernizing was that, for the first time in history, the Christians of the Islamic world were by and large no longer oppressed—certainly not by the standards of their previous history under Islam. Two causes account for this Christian Golden Age in the Muslim world. In the first place the European powers, which in the nineteenth century still largely identified with Christianity, directly intervened in the Muslim world to liberate and protect Christians.¹⁶ Second and even more important was the fact that many Muslims emulated Western ways, naturally sloughing off their Islamic identity and mentality and the contempt for “infidels” that, as we shall see, is an integral part of that mentality. As a missionary to the Muslim world wrote in the early twentieth century, “tolerance toward converts from

Islam seems often to be in direct proportion to the proximity of foreign government and their influence, and the impact of Western civilization in breaking down fanaticism.”¹⁷

Thus the discriminatory Sharia laws governing “dhimmis”—that is, non-Muslims living in conditions of subjugation and humiliation under Islamic hegemony—were all abolished during this era. The most obvious example was the abolition of the “jizya”—the monetary tribute Christians had to pay to safeguard their lives in an Islamic state. In 1856, the Ottoman Empire, under pressure from European powers, especially England and France, issued the Hatt-i Humayun decree as part of its overall reforms (or “tanzimat”): for the first time in Islam’s 1,200 years of existence (at the time), non-Muslim subjects were to be treated as equal to Muslims, and their right to religious freedom and worship was to be guaranteed. It is often forgotten, but a great many Christian churches still in existence today in the Islamic world were built precisely during this era of colonial intervention, Muslim emulation of the West, and unprecedented tolerance.

One historian writes about Egyptian Christianity under Islam through the centuries, “There can scarcely be any argument, however, about whether the Coptic Church was significantly stronger in 1882 than it was in 1798, by almost any measure.” (Recall that 1798 was the year of Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt.) An Egyptian Christian chronicler writing around the turn of the twentieth century summarizes the Golden Age for Christians thus: “In a word we say that the Egyptian State [1874–1894] was at the highest degree of justice and good order and arrangement. And it removed religious fanaticism, and almost established equality between its subjects, Christian and Islam, and it eliminated most of the injustice, and it realized much in the way of beneficial works for the benefit of all the inhabitants.”¹⁸

Of course, one should not oversimplify the situation. There were still pious Muslims and oppressed Christians even during this period. The point is that, overall, acceptance of Christians reached unprecedented levels during this era—hence it is rightfully referred to as the Golden Age.

Christians, for their part, came to champion yet another Western innovation—nationalism—that helped identify them no longer as members of a religious minority but as fellow members of the nation-state. Membership in “the Arabic Nation” was open to everyone who spoke Arabic, which obviously included Christians. It was a subtle but important shift from the predecessor idea of the *umma*, the distinctly *Muslim* nation. In the 1920s and 1930s, Egyptian intellectuals traced their lineage to and identified with Pharaonic and Hellenistic Egypt—not the Arab past. By the middle of the twentieth century, the Middle East’s Christians were widely seen, particularly by the educated elites and those in power, as no different from their Muslim counterparts. Thanks to nationalism, they were now all citizens of the state: “An inferior religious minority had become an integrated and equal part of Egyptian society.”¹⁹ Indeed, because Muslims identified Christianity with Western civilization, which was widely acknowledged for its superiority, Christians were sometimes respected precisely because they were Christian. (Muslims still conflate Christianity with the West; today, however, this confusion only leads to more persecution of Christians, as we shall see.)

It is this historical fact—that the colonial and post-colonial era, roughly 1850–1950, was the Golden Age for Christians in the Muslim world—that has created chronological confusions and intellectual pitfalls for Westerners on the subject of the return of Christians’ persecution. This hundred-year lull in persecution is taken as the norm by recent generations of Westerners who see events closer to their time as more representative of reality. Thus many Westerners see the contemporary persecution of Christians by Muslims as the historical aberration, and they seek vainly to explain that violence away without recourse to Islam, remembering the relatively non-violent Islam of just a few decades ago. They fail to comprehend that the Golden Age was the historical aberration—an exception to the rule, not the rule.

To put it in slightly different terms, the era when Christians lived in relative safety in the Muslim world is so much closer to us in time than the “storybook” centuries of persecution that many in the West cannot help but filter current events through this Golden Age paradigm—though

this paradigm fits the facts less and less with each passing day. After all, in the collective consciousness of recent generations, Christians under Islam had it pretty good. How can what we are hearing now—that they are being subjected to horrific and bloody persecution simply for being Christian—be real? Don't such stories belong in the distant and unenlightened past? There must be some reason—maybe poverty, or resentment of the “occupation” of Palestine or of Iraq or against the hegemony of the West in general—that explains why previously peaceful Muslims are now violently persecuting Christians. Surely it is a matter of economics or politics, an aberration that is destined to rectify itself?

But the facts speak for themselves. In 1900, at the height of the Golden Age, 20 percent of the Middle East was still Christian, whereas today less than 2 percent is, and the Christian population is rapidly dwindling.²⁰ Indeed, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, “The flight of Christians out of the [Middle Eastern] region is unprecedented and it's increasing year by year.” In our lifetime “Christians might disappear altogether from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt.”²¹

FROM EMULATION TO CONTEMPT

What happened? If in the “Golden Age” leading up to the middle of the twentieth century Muslims were increasingly emulating the West, exactly when and why did this stop? What caused the trend to reverse and start speeding in the opposite direction?

That Muslims have turned away from the West and back toward Islam is no secret. Of course there were always Muslims who still clung to the Islamic way, the Sharia,²² but in the early twentieth century it seemed obvious that they were on the wrong side of history. The future clearly seemed to belong to Westernization and secularization. And yet by the 1970s, there was no denying that Islam had returned in a very big way. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 symbolizes resurgent Islam in the American mind. Bearded and morose mullahs, chief among them the Ayatollah Khomeini, characterizing America as the “Great Satan,” became so popular among the Iranian people that they overthrew the

secularist Reza Shah. Up until this event, the overwhelming majority of Western scholars had been convinced that the Westernization of the Muslim world was nearly complete, that Islam was an all but spent force, at best a cultural heritage for nominal Muslims. Instead, by the 1970s, “Islam is the solution” became the new clarion call of the Muslim world.

Why this change took place—why Muslims abandoned Western ways—is much less understood. Of course any such large historical movement has many causes. Ironically, however, one crucial factor (often missed) was the continued Western influence on Muslims—but now in a novel and negative direction: *just as Muslims had earlier learned respect for the West and sought to emulate it in varying degrees, so roughly around the middle of the twentieth century, Muslims began to have contempt for the West and turned away from it, back to their own heritage and Islamic identity.* Muslims reverted, and increasingly continue to revert, to the Islamic way in all things from the mundane to the momentous, from the details of Islamic dress to the patterns of Islamic intolerance of Christians that had marked the centuries of Islamic history before the anomalous “Golden Age” for Christians.

And where did Muslims, especially beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, learn to despise the West? The same place they had originally learned to respect the West—that is, from the West itself. It is no coincidence that the return of “Islamic fundamentalism,” as it was called in the 1970s, followed close on the heels of the cultural revolution that took the West by storm beginning in the 1960s. Muslims learned contempt for the West from the new culture of sexual licentiousness, moral relativism, godlessness, and even Western self-hatred that flooded Western societies in the 1960s, though they had roots going back decades earlier. These things were all tolerated or even celebrated in the mainstream of Western society. Yet such licentiousness and moral relativism proved intolerable to Muslim societies that had admired and emulated the West when it was still characterized by moral restraint. Muslims definitively rejected the 1960s Sexual Revolution. But they picked up another aspect of the 1960s—the hyper-criticism of the West and its values by leftist Western intellectuals. Muslim opinion about the West soured and eventually turned hostile.

Consider the life and times of Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966)—the one Muslim who probably did the most to revive Islam in modern times. Qutb popularized the idea that Muslims had turned away from Islam and that they must resurrect jihad and hatred for non-Muslim “infidels.” Formerly an Egyptian teacher and writer who had exhibited few radical tendencies, Qutb traveled to the United States only to return to Egypt an avowed enemy of all things Western. Qutb was a little ahead of the curve—he was disgusted by the sexuality and materialism of mid-twentieth-century America. One can only surmise what he would have thought of American popular culture after 1968 (two years after he was executed by the Egyptian state for his incessant calls to jihad.) There are certainly millions of Muslims today who bring Qutb’s critical attitude to the Western culture of 2013. In Qutb’s 1964 book, *Milestones*—a revered classic among Islamic radicals—he argued that, while Muslims should emulate Western science and technology, they must reject Western culture and social norms. Instead, Islam and its way—the Sharia—must rule the Islamic world, and then the world. But first it must rule its own domain. According to Qutb, the overwhelming majority of Muslims in his time were not even Muslim—they were essentially apostates.

The West had earned Muslim respect in the era of Western might and confidence. But by the 1970s, Western intellectuals were pushing once-Westward-looking Muslims back to Islam. Consider the realm of historical studies alone: Christian Western civilization is now portrayed as the root cause of all the world’s woes. Islamic civilization is now portrayed as just another noble victim of Christian depredation. The objective history of the relationship between Islam and the West has been turned on its head: Christian Crusaders have become greedy imperialists invading peaceful Muslim lands—without any mention of the fact that those “Muslim lands” were Christian lands centuries before Islam seized them by the sword and slowly decimated their indigenous Christian populations. Western academics and intellectuals make it a point to praise Muslim achievements, even where there are none—like President Obama, who ordered NASA to make Muslims “feel good about their historic contribution to science.”²³

Far from appeasing angry Muslims, such self-loathing and sycophantic behavior has prompted even more revulsion to Western culture in the Islamic world. Long gone are the days when the West, confident and proud of its own ways, attracted Muslims to its civilizational achievements. Now, apologizing for its “sins” and demonizing its own Christian heritage while whitewashing the cultures and histories of others, the West only pushes Muslims back to reclaiming their Islamic heritage.

Consider what a difference this turn in Western culture has made in the Islamic world. In the nineteenth century, when the West was unapologetically hegemonic, Muslims not only respected the West, but they also tried to emulate it. The reason for this admiration is simple: Islam, the quintessential religion of might makes right, teaches respect for power. When the West did not equivocate over its principles, Muslims saw power and confidence in those principles and found them worthy of copying. Such emulation went on until roughly the mid-twentieth century; it explains why much of the Muslim world Westernized and secularized, leading to a Golden Age of tolerance for Christian minorities. When the West, or at least popular culture in the West, became spiritually bankrupt and began apologizing for itself, Muslims, disgusted, turned back to Islam and its way, the Sharia—all, of course, to Western approval and encouragement. And now the myopic West cannot comprehend that Muslims have gone back to treating Christians in the exact same ways Muslims treated Christians before Muslims began to emulate the West. That history is all but lost. In fact, the cognitive dissonance between what the multiculturalists in the West believe about the benign and even superior culture of Islam, and what is reported as actually taking place in the Muslim world, is so great that many Westerners simply cannot take in the facts.

But the reality—whether we are ready to recognize it or not—is that as the Muslim world reclaims its Islamic identity, distinctly Islamic practices from centuries past are returning, including Muslim persecution of Christians. Tawfik Hamid, a former member of Egypt’s terrorist organization the Islamic Group, correctly observes that “the proliferation of the hijab is strongly correlated with increased terrorism.... Terrorism became much more frequent in such societies as Indonesia, Egypt,

Algeria, and the U.K. *after* the hijab became prevalent among Muslim women living in those communities.”²⁴ The reason for this correlation is simple: Islam’s Sharia, its way, teaches intolerance and violence against non-Muslims, no less than it teaches that Muslim women should wear the hijab. Where one returns the other will naturally follow.

The persecution of Christian minorities in Muslim nations is among the most visible aspects of resurgent Islam. Nowhere does Islam behave like Islam as it does at home—where it is in power and not in need of pretense. Today, as the Islamic world reclaims its identity, Christians are further demonized as the “main transmitters of Western and modern attitudes.”²⁵ And the work of eradicating them, which was begun some 1,400 years ago, is now on its way to fulfillment.

KORAN AND CALIPH

So Muslims are turning back to Islam, and Christians are being persecuted. But is Islam itself really to blame? What about ethnic, cultural, social, and economic considerations? Where is the proof that Islam and its Sharia are intrinsically hostile to Christians? This is not the place for a comprehensive examination of the hostility to Christians found in the Koran, in the “hadith” (other words and deeds attributed to Muhammad), in the rulings of the “ulema” (Islamic legal authorities), and in the historical texts that document centuries of jihad on Christendom. But a quick review of the most important Islamic sources will demonstrate why Christians are so vulnerable in the Islamic world.

The Koran

The Koran itself contains a number of anti-Christian verses. These include Koran 5:73, “Infidels are they who say Allah is one of three,” a reference to the Christian Trinity; and Koran 5:17, “Infidels are they who say Allah is the Christ, [Jesus] son of Mary” (see also Koran 4:171). To be referred to as an infidel (that is, a “kafir”) is to be categorized as an enemy of Islam, who must be either eliminated or subjugated (see Koran 9:5 and 9:29).

Apologists often cite other Koranic verses that ostensibly speak well of Christians. The most popular of these verses states, “You will discover that the most implacable men in their enmity to the believers [Muslims] are the Jews and pagans; and you will discover that the closest in affection to the believers are they who say ‘We are Christians’” (Koran 5:82). Apologists who cite this verse habitually fail to cite the following verses, which clarify the context: Christians are “closest in affection . . . because there are priests and monks among them, and they are not arrogant. And if they listen to that which was revealed to the Messenger [Muhammad], you will see their eyes swell with tears as they recognize its truth. They say, ‘Our Lord, count us among the witnesses’” (Koran 5: 82–93). In other words, and as mainstream Islamic exegesis holds, the Christians referred to in this text are those who can be expected to convert to Islam—which is precisely why the Koran portrays them in a positive light.

In any case, statements in the Koran have to be read according to the doctrine of “abrogation,” which was developed early in Islamic jurisprudence to deal with the Koran’s many contradictory statements. Muslims believe that wherever verses contradict each other, the verse from later in Muhammad’s career cancels out the verse from earlier. Allah himself justifies abrogation in the Koran: “Whenever we abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, we replace it by a better or similar one. Know you not that Allah has power over all things?” (Koran 2:106; see also 16:101, 13:39, and 17:86). As it happens, the few verses that speak tolerantly of Christians are from early in Muhammad’s career, when he had no political power, whereas the hostile verses that name Christians “infidel” enemies occur towards the end, near the height of his career. Thus the later hostile verses cancel out any tolerance for Christians expressed in the earlier verses.

The Koran’s final word on the fate of Christians and Jews is found in Koran 9:29. There Allah commands believers, “Fight those among the People of the Book who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor forbid what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor embrace the religion of truth, until they pay the jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.” In Islamic parlance, “People of the Book” is a

reference to those pre-Islamic peoples who had their own scriptures—chief among them, Christians and Jews. This verse gives divine sanction to the perpetual subjugation of Christians under Islam. Koran 9:29 and its equally bellicose counterpart Koran 9:5, known as “the Sword Verses,” appeared as Muhammad’s armies were preparing to invade the Christian territories of the Byzantine empire.

To this day, mainstream Islamic jurisprudence holds that the Sword Verses have “abrogated, canceled, and replaced 124 verses that called for tolerance, compassion, and peace.”²⁶ A year after proclaiming these anti-Christian verses, Muhammad was dead, revelations ceased, and the Islamic jihad against the surrounding infidels, most of whom were Christians, erupted from Arabia.

Jihad

The first part of Koran 9:29 is an open-ended command—one not limited by time or space—to fight Christians and Jews. The second part of the verse explains when this fighting is to cease: when Christians and Jews either convert to Islam or “pay the *jizya* with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.”

The idea of fighting non-Muslims until they pay tribute is foundational to Islam—and hardly limited to the Koran. In a well-known canonical hadith, Muhammad commanded his jihadis to invade the realms of the infidels and order the latter to convert to Islam: “If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the *Jizya*. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah’s help and fight them.”²⁷ In another canonical hadith Muhammad proclaims: “I have been commanded to wage war against mankind until they testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and that they establish prostration-prayer, and pay the alms-tax [that is, until they become Muslims]. If they do so, their blood and property are protected.”²⁸ There are literally hundreds of similar Islamic texts enjoining Muslims to fight non-Muslims until the latter either convert or pay tribute and live in submission.

Because of these texts, Islam's ulema—its scholars, sheikhs, clerics, and muftis, past and present—have agreed that Islam is to be at perpetual war with the non-Muslim world until its inhabitants submit. As Muslim scholar, philosopher, and historian Ibn Khaldun once wrote,

In the Muslim community, the holy war [jihad] is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force.... The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the holy war was not a religious duty for them, save only for purposes of defense.... They are merely required to establish their religion among their own people.... *But Islam is under obligation to gain power over other nations.* [Emphasis added.]²⁹

The authoritative scholar of Sharia law Majid Khaduri (1909–2007) agrees. He has written that jihad—defined as warfare to subjugate the non-Muslim world—“is regarded by all [Muslim] jurists, with almost no exception, as a collective obligation of the whole Muslim community.”³⁰ Islamic legal manuals written in Arabic are even more explicit.³¹

Before the era of political correctness set in, modern Western authorities unequivocally agreed. The *Encyclopaedia of Islam*'s entry for “jihad” explains that the “spread of Islam by arms is a religious duty upon Muslims in general.... Jihad must continue to be done until the whole world is under the rule of Islam.... Islam must completely be made over before the doctrine of jihad can be eliminated.”

Tribute and Submission

As Koran 9:29 puts it, the jihad concludes when the People of the Book “pay the jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued”—that is, when they pay tribute and live under Islamic subjugation. Partly because it was more profitable to subjugate infidels than to slaughter them all, even those religious groups that were not originally deemed

People of the Book, such as Hindus, were eventually offered the option of paying jizya and living in subjugation.

While “jizya” is often translated as “tribute,” the root meaning of the word is to “repay” or “recompense,” basically to “compensate” for something. According to the *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, the standard Arabic-English dictionary, jizya is something that “takes the place” of something else, or “serves instead.” Simply put, conquered non-Muslims were to purchase their lives, which were otherwise forfeit to their Muslim conquerors, with money. Some jurists spell this out, writing that “their lives and their possessions are only protected by reason of payment of jizya.”³² Western apologists often call jizya “protection money,” which it was—though protection, not from outsiders, as is often implied, but from surrounding Muslims, which, unless the jizya, the “compensation,” was paid, deemed the life of the infidel forfeit. In the medieval era, Christians traveling in Muslim lands sometimes had to wear their jizya-receipts around their necks to prove that their lives had been ransomed, or risk being slain as non-paying infidels.³³

Yet the matter does not end here. Koran 9:29 does not just specify that the conquered non-Muslims must pay the jizya but that they pay it “with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.” The Arabic word translated as “subdued” here is “saghirun,” which comes from a root that, according to the *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, means: “to be lowly, submissive, servile, humble”; “contemptible, servile,” to “fawn, cringe, grovel”; “low, lowly, despised, contemptible; humiliated, meek, dejected; submissive, servile, subject.” Thus to treat people as *saghirun* is “to belittle, deride, ridicule, debase, demean” them. (According to *Hans Wehr*, the root word originally meant to physically “diminish, decrease, wane, dwindle,” and the use of this word likely implied that the impoverishment of subjugated non-Muslims would “diminish, decrease, wane, and dwindle” their wealth and strength—which it certainly did.)

This, then, is how the Koran—which Muslims hold to be the literal word of Allah—commands Muslims to make their defeated non-Muslim opponents feel. These are the images that come to the minds of Arabic

readers of the Koran—much more graphic than the usual English translation “subdued.”

The theme of non-Muslim degradation appears regularly in the commentaries of Islam’s authorities. According to the *Medieval Islamic Civilization Encyclopedia*, Muslim “jurists came to view certain repressive and humiliating aspects of dhimma as de rigueur. Dhimmis were required to pay the jizya publicly, in broad daylight, with hands turned palm upward, and to receive a smart smack on the forehead or the nape of the neck from the collection officer.” Some of Islam’s jurists mandated a number of other humiliating rituals at the time of jizya payment, including that the presiding Muslim official slap, choke, and in some cases pull the beard of the paying dhimmi, who might even be required to approach the official on all fours, like an animal.³⁴

While other verses make clear that infidels are to be despised (see Koran 3: 100, 110–112, 118–120), Koran 9:29 is the cornerstone in the edifice of the systematic humiliation of non-Muslims. Consider Ibn Kathir’s exegesis of this verse, a mainstream interpretation:

Allah said, “until they pay the jizya,” if they do not choose to embrace Islam, “with willing submission,” that is, in defeat and subservience, “and feel themselves subdued,” that is, disgraced, humiliated, and belittled. Therefore, Muslims are not allowed to honor the dhimmis or elevate them above Muslims, for they are miserable, disgraced, and humiliated. Sahih Muslim [a canonical hadith collection] recorded from Abu Hurraira that the Prophet said, “Do not initiate the Salam [peace greeting] to the Jews and Christians, and if you meet any of them in a road, force them to its narrowest alley.” This is why the Leader of the Faithful, [the second caliph] Omar bin al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, demanded his well-known conditions be met by the Christians, conditions that ensured their continued humiliation, degradation and disgrace.³⁵

The Conditions of Omar

Ibn Kathir did well to name Caliph Omar in the context of the subjugation of dhimmis (based on a word meaning “to find fault in” or “to affix blame to”), the status of those who still refuse to convert willingly to Islam. Whereas Koran 9:29 gives divine sanction to fighting Christians and Jews until they agree to pay tribute and live in submission, the so-called *The Conditions of Omar* (also known as the *Pact of Omar*) lays out in detail exactly how they are to feel themselves subdued.

Named after the second caliph, Omar bin al-Khattab who reigned from 634–644, *The Conditions of Omar* was purportedly agreed upon between the caliph and a community of Christians conquered by invading Muslims (possibly in Jerusalem under the Patriarch Sophronius). The *Conditions* was likely redacted under other caliphs, most notably Omar ibn Abdulaziz, who ruled from 717–720. Western scholars have doubts about the authorship of the *Conditions*—later Muslims jurists actually may have compiled the document.

But in regard to the historicity of *The Conditions of Omar*—or any other question concerning the history of Islam—Western scholarship is purely academic. In the real world, specifically the Islamic world, what mainstream Islam teaches and what Muslims believe are what matter. And Islamic teaching makes *The Conditions of Omar* the canonical text for the treatment of Christians under Islam.

Regardless of the actual origins of the *Conditions*, Muslim tradition holds that it originates with Omar I, the second of the four righteous caliphs, whose position in Sunni Islam is second only to that of Muhammad. Accordingly it is the foundational text on the treatment of dhimmis. *The Conditions of Omar* has unquestioned authority among Sunni Islam’s mainstream scholars such as Ibn Hazm, al-Tartushi, Ibn Qudama, Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Asakir, Ibn Kathir, al-Hindi, and Ali Ajin.³⁶

The fourteenth-century Ibn Qayyim, who wrote the most comprehensive and referenced work concerning the treatment of dhimmis, aptly titled, in translation, *Rulings Concerning Dhimmis*, spends much time examining the *Conditions*, saying that “the fame of these Conditions are

such that they need no documentation: for the imams have accepted them, mentioned them in their books, and used them in their arguments; the Conditions of Omar are still constantly on their tongues and in their books. And the caliphs after him also enforced them.”³⁷ Likewise, the eighth-century jurist Abu Yusuf said the *Conditions* must “stand till the day of resurrection” because they are in agreement with the Koran and the hadith literature.

There are different versions of the text of *The Conditions of Omar*, but they vary only slightly. The complete text of one of the most authoritative versions of the *Conditions*—the first one Ibn Qayyim reproduced in his book—follows below. As in most versions, the conquered Christians appear to be speaking:

When you came to our countries, we asked you for safety for ourselves and the people of our community, upon which we imposed the following conditions on ourselves for you:

Not to build a church in our city—nor a monastery, convent, or monk’s cell in the surrounding areas—and not to repair those that fall in ruins or are in Muslim quarters;

Not to prevent Muslims from lodging in our churches, by day or night, and to keep their doors wide open for [Muslim] passersby and travelers;

Not to harbor in them [churches, monasteries] or our homes a spy, nor conceal any deceptions from Muslims;

Not to clang our cymbals except lightly and from the innermost recesses of our churches;

Not to display a cross on them [churches], nor raise our voices during prayer or readings in our churches anywhere near Muslims;

Not to produce a cross or [Christian] book in the markets of the Muslims;

Not to congregate in the open for Easter or Palm Sunday, nor lift our voices [in lamentation] for our dead nor show our firelights with them near the market places of the Muslims;

Not to bring near to them [Muslims] pigs or alcohol;

Not to display any signs of polytheism, nor make our religion appealing, nor call or proselytize anyone to it;

Not to take anything of [or “be involved with”] the slave conquered by the Muslims;

Not to prevent any of our relatives who wish to enter into Islam;

To distinguish ourselves wherever we are and not to resemble Muslims in dress—whether in headgear, turbans, sandals, hair-parting, or modes of transportation;

Not to speak like them [Muslims], nor adopt their surnames;

To clip our foreheads and not part our forelocks;

To tighten our zunanir [a type of belt] around our waists and not to engrave our signet rings in Arabic nor ride on saddles;

Not to possess or bear any arms whatsoever, nor gird ourselves with swords;

To honor the Muslims, show them the way, and rise up from our seats if they wish to sit down;

Not to come upon them in their homes, nor teach our children the Koran;

None of us shall do business with a Muslim unless the Muslim commands it;

To host every traveling Muslim for three days and feed him adequately;

We guarantee all this to you upon ourselves, our descendants, our spouses, and our neighbors, and if we change or contradict these conditions imposed upon ourselves in order to receive safety, we forfeit our dhimma [covenant], and we become liable to the same treatment you inflict upon the people who resist and cause sedition.³⁸

To “become liable to the same treatment you inflict upon the people who resist and cause sedition” simply meant that, if any of the stipulations in the *Conditions* was broken, the Christians would resume their natural status as non-submitting infidels who “resist and cause sedition” against Islam—becoming, once again, free game for killing or enslavement. Other versions of *The Conditions of Omar* add yet more stipulations that Christians conquered by the sword of Islam had to embrace in order to exist as Christians, the infraction of any of which led to the loss of their protected status. Omar himself insisted upon one of these: that Christians never raise their hands against a Muslim, including in self-defense.

The above text makes the position of conquered Christians under Islam painfully clear. It was ratified at a time when Christians still made up the overwhelming majority of the populations of the conquered territories. As the ratio shifted in favor of Muslims over the centuries, Islamic jurists of the first few centuries of Islam built upon the *Conditions*, stipulating that conquered non-Muslim dhimmis had to abide by the following rules in order to be “protected” from—not by—Islam.

Many are simple regurgitations of the *Conditions*, while others were reached through analogy to Omar's original stipulations and Koran 9:29:

Restrictions on expressions of worship:

- Building new churches or repairing old ones was banned.
- Displaying “idolatry” or “paganism” was banned. Thus crucifixes, Bibles and other Christian books, Christian prayers, church singing, bells, cymbals, and Christian funeral processions all were banned from public display.

Restrictions on freedom:

- Proselytizing Muslims was banned.
- Blasphemy—often loosely interpreted as criticism of or offense towards Islam, its prophet, or even Muslims in general—was banned.
- Apostasy was banned—any Muslim who converted to Christianity was subject to the death penalty.

Inferior social status:

- Dhimmi had to adopt a humble demeanor and always respect Muslims.
- Dhimmi testimony was not valid against a Muslim in court.
- Raising one's hands to a Muslim—even in self-defense—was banned on pain of death.
- Dhimmi blood was not equal to Muslim blood. While killing a Muslim was punished by death, Muslims were not liable to the death penalty for killing dhimmis.
- Preventing a fellow Christian's conversion to Islam was banned. (Such conversions to Islam were encouraged by the preferential treatment converts would receive, especially vis-à-vis those who remained Christians. The convert to Islam would be granted custody of children, inherit the family's property, not have to pay jizya, and so forth.)

- Dhimmis could not hold public office, or in any way be in positions of authority over Muslims.
- Intermarriage between Muslims and Christians was banned, except when the man, who has ultimate authority, was Muslim and the woman was Christian—a reminder of the Christians’ “submissive” role—never vice-versa.
- Christians were forbidden to bury their dead anywhere near Muslims, alive or dead.
- Dhimmi homes had to be smaller and lower than Muslim homes.³⁹

The restrictions above are described in the past tense, as they were established during Islam’s early years. But they apply in the present tense as well—or perhaps we should say *again*—as the Islamic world rediscovers its identity. These debilitations and humiliations, which were inflicted upon the Christians of the Islamic world in the past, are at this moment being inflicted upon the Christians of the Islamic world in the present, as a natural consequence of Muslims returning to the authentic teachings of Islam. Those teachings, as we have seen—and will see more fully—are fundamentally hostile to non-Muslims and their religious worship.

Indeed, *The Conditions of Omar*, far from being merely a historical or theoretical text, is still very much on the minds of Muslims. Compare the above text of the *Conditions* with the following words of Saudi Sheikh Marzouk Salem al-Ghamdi, spoken during a Friday mosque sermon:

If the infidels live among the Muslims, in accordance with the conditions set out by the Prophet—there is nothing wrong with it provided they pay Jizya to the Islamic treasury. Other conditions are ... that they do not renovate a church or a monastery, do not rebuild ones that were destroyed, that they feed for three days any Muslim who passes by their homes ... that they rise when a Muslim wishes to sit, that

they do not imitate Muslims in dress and speech, nor ride horses, nor own swords, nor arm themselves with any kind of weapon; that they do not sell wine, do not show the cross, do not ring church bells, do not raise their voices during prayer, that they shave their hair in front so as to make them easily identifiable, do not incite anyone against the Muslims, and do not strike a Muslim. . . . If they violate these conditions, they have no protection.⁴⁰

Such is the continuity of Islam's hostility to Christianity. The *Conditions* and related Sharia law justify countless attacks on Christians today. As we shall see, churches in Muslim countries are regularly bombed, burned, or simply denied permits to renovate or even to exist. Crosses are burned and Bibles are confiscated. Muslim converts to Christianity are often violently attacked and sometimes executed. Christians accused of committing "blasphemy"—which can mean simply discussing Islam, or even Christianity—are assaulted and killed. Jizya is exacted from Christians once again. Christians are forced to convert to Islam. Christian women and children are abducted and raped. The following pages are witness to hundreds of modern-day examples of Christian persecution that conform perfectly to Koran 9:29, *The Conditions of Omar*, and, in a word, to Sharia—the "way" of Islam.



PART TWO

ISLAM'S WAR ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Unlike attacks on Christian individuals, which may be motivated by a myriad of factors, the ongoing attacks on Christian worship in the Muslim world are indisputable evidence of the persecution of Christians under Islam. In church, Christians are simply being Christians—peacefully congregating and worshipping their Lord. And yet modern-day Muslim governments try to prevent them from doing so, Muslim mobs attack them, and Muslim jihadis massacre them.

This should be unsurprising. Sharia law is hostile to Christian worship. It puts draconian restrictions on every expression of it, from churches to crosses. In fact, Christian worship was the very first thing *The Conditions of Omar* addressed and suppressed. Conquered Christians had to agree

Not to build a church in our city—nor a monastery, convent, or monk's cell in the surrounding areas—and not to repair those that fall in ruins or are in Muslim quarters;

Not to prevent Muslims from lodging in our churches, by day or night, and to keep their doors wide open for [Muslim] passersby and travelers;

Not to harbor in them [churches and monasteries] or our homes a spy, nor conceal any deceits from Muslims;

Not to clang our cymbals except lightly and from the innermost recesses of our churches;

Not to display a cross on them [churches], nor raise our voices during prayer or readings in our churches anywhere near Muslims;

Not to produce a cross or [Christian] book in the markets of the Muslims;

Not to congregate in the open for Easter or Palm Sunday, nor lift our voices [in lamentation] for our dead nor show our firelights with them in the market places of the Muslims.¹

For a comprehensive understanding of Islam's hostility to Christian worship, we will first examine Islamic doctrines concerning Christian worship. Next we will consider how these teachings have manifested themselves in practice over the course of centuries. And finally, we will demonstrate the continuity of the Islamic assault on Christian worship by showing how modern-day attacks on churches and religious objects such as crosses mirror the attacks of history—how the patterns of the persecution of Christians under Islam through the centuries are often identical to the patterns of persecution we see in Muslim countries today.

ISLAMIC HOSTILITY FOR THE THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS OBLIGATORY

According to mainstream Islamic law, all churches on lands that Muslims took by force were to be destroyed or converted to mosques. If

Sharia law had been followed to the letter, this would have included every church from Spain in the west to India in the east, and from the Balkans in the north to the fringes of the Sahara desert in the south, as these were the demarcation lines of the Islamic conquests. Famous churches annexed by Islam include the Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom), Christendom's grandest cathedral for nearly one thousand years until it was despoiled after the Ottoman jihadi conquest of Constantinople in 1453—its crosses and icons destroyed and defaced, and the cathedral transformed into a mosque.²

Churches on lands that were surrendered to Islam without resistance, on the other hand, were permitted to continue to exist as churches, though their survival was subject to several stipulations, mostly stemming from *The Conditions of Omar* excerpted above. And even obedience to those stringent conditions did not always guarantee their survival, as later jurists decreed that even the churches of Christians who surrendered peacefully could be destroyed or transformed into mosques at the discretion of the local governor, especially if it was deemed to be in the interest of Muslims.

In short, as “houses of infidelity,” where Christians were accused of engaging in idolatry (“worshipping” crucifixes, icons, and so forth) and polytheism (associating Jesus with God), that is, *shirk*—one of the most reprehensible crimes in Islam—churches in those lands conquered by Islam were either to be destroyed or transformed into mosques; those in territories peacefully annexed were to be left to crumble. Needless to say, the question of building new churches on Muslim lands—whether conquered by force or surrendered peacefully—was, and doctrinally speaking still is, out of the question. In practice, however, especially during the colonial era, churches were repaired and even built in the Islamic world.

The issue of churches in Islam has been important enough to warrant the publication of numerous fatwas, treatises, and even whole books on the topic. One of the most comprehensive modern treatises, nearly sixty pages long, is entitled, in translation, *The Ruling on Building Churches and Other Idolatrous Places of Worship in Muslim Lands*, by Sheikh Ismail bin Muhammad al-Ansari (d. 1996).³ Published around 1979, it was deemed authoritative enough to receive high praise from Saudi Arabia's former Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz,

recognized as one of the twentieth century's most authoritative Islamic scholars. In his foreword to the treatise, the late Grand Mufti explained,

After reading this treatise from beginning to end, I have found it to be very valuable [he later adds that he has ordered its further publication and dissemination far and wide]. In it, the author documents all mention concerning churches, monasteries, and other places of idolatrous worship as found in the prophetic hadith and other books and the words of the ulema of the four schools of law. . . . Without a doubt, the subject of this treatise is very important—especially in this era, when interaction between infidels and Muslims has increased, including Christian activities to build churches in some of the Muslim countries, and especially in the Arabian Peninsula.

The ulema—Allah have mercy on them—have agreed that it is forbidden to build churches in Islamic lands; that it is obligatory to demolish them if they are built; and that building them in the Arabian Peninsula, including the Hijaz, Gulf Countries, and Yemen, is the greatest sin and offense. For the Prophet, followed by his Companions, ordered the expulsion of all Jews, Christians, and idolaters from the Arabian Peninsula, and forbade other religions from being practiced.

It is worth noting that this policy has not changed. In March 2012, the current Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, declared that it is “necessary to destroy all the churches” in the Arabian Peninsula, basing his decree on the Muslim prophet’s deathbed wish that the Peninsula tolerate no other religion than Islam.⁴

The treatise offers example after example from Islam’s *usul al-fiqh* or “roots of jurisprudence,” including the hadith and the rulings of the four schools of Sunni law justifying the ban on churches and the command to destroy them whenever and wherever they are built in Muslim lands. These include such unequivocal statements attributed to the prophet Muhammad as, “Do not build a church in Islam and do not repair what

falls apart,” and “Let there not be two qiblas in one land”⁵ (interpreted to mean that non-Muslim places of worship are prohibited from contending with Islam).

Another, more recent, Arabic fatwa—in translation, *Building Churches in Muslim Lands*, written by Sheikh Nasir bin Muhammad al-Ahmed and published in 2008—after listing the usual anti-church quotations from the Prophet, his companions, and other important early Muslim figures, concludes with a personal note to the reader: “So as you can see, the ulema of the Muslims, and their jurists—both past and present—are all agreed that it is forbidden to build new churches in Islamic lands.”⁶

While *The Conditions of Omar* is believed to be the earliest primary source for the rulings on churches, almost every subsequent treatise on the topic relies on two of Islam’s giants, Taqi al-Din Ahmed ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and his student—an eventual master in his own right—Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350). More than any others, these two men—Islamic counterparts to the Greek philosopher Socrates and his student Plato—are credited with elaborating and codifying all rules concerning subjugated Christians and their churches, which they refer to in their voluminous writings as “worse than bars and brothels” and “houses of torment and fire.”⁷ Any Muslim interested in knowing what Islam’s rules for Christians are must consult these twin pillars.

Ibn Qayyim is especially famous for his multivolume *Rulings Concerning Dhimmis*. In it he confirms that it is “obligatory” to destroy or convert into a mosque “every church” both old and new that exists on lands that were taken by Muslims through force, for they “breed corruption.” Even if Muslims are not sure whether one of “these things [churches] is old [pre-conquest] or new, it is better to err on the side of caution, treat it as new, and demolish it.”⁸

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyya confirms that “the ulema of the Muslims from all four schools of law—Hanafi, Shafi‘i, Maliki, Hanbali, and others, including al-Thawri, al-Layth, all the way back to the companions and the followers [of Muhammad]—are all agreed that if the imam destroys every church in lands taken by force, such as Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Syria...this would not be deemed unjust of him,” adding that, if Christians

resist, “they forfeit their covenant, their lives, and their possessions.” Elsewhere he writes, “Wherever Muslims live and have mosques, it is impermissible for any sign of infidelity to be present, churches or otherwise.”⁹

As for any Muslim who may disagree with these rulings, Ibn Taymiyya—whom Wahabbis and Salafis all but venerate—has a stern warning: “Whoever thinks churches are houses of Allah, and that Allah is worshipped inside them, or that what Jews and Christians do is worship of Allah and obedience to his prophet, or whoever likes them or agrees to them, or helps them to open them [churches] and establish their religions, thinking that this is a form of being near or obedient [to Allah], is an apostate infidel.”

While apologists for Islam dismiss the words of scholars like Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim as pertaining to only one school of Islamic jurisprudence (namely, the Hanbali), the fact is that all four schools of Islamic law are agreed that new churches cannot be built and old ones allowed to exist cannot be repaired; there is unanimity on this point. Hostility to churches is not based on a particular “Salafi” point of view—even if the Salafis are the most vociferous in expressing it. For example, in an eighteenth-century fatwa the Maliki jurist Sheikh al-Adawi declares,

The decisions made by our ulema state that they [Christians] will not be permitted to build new churches in Muslim countries, and that, if they build them, it is an obligation to demolish them. As for the reconstruction of those which have been destroyed, this is not possible in any manner; it would even be preferable not to allow these buildings to be repaired.¹⁰

In any case, it is precisely the Hanbali school of thought, the one that venerates Ibn Taymiyya and al-Qayyim, that is becoming ubiquitous, thanks to Saudi wealth and influence. (Later we will delve into the effects of the widespread dissemination of Saudi literature and educational materials across Muslim populations.) Suffice it to say, “Salafis,” or “radicals,” are growing in number and influence around the world

ISLAMIC HOSTILITY FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN HISTORY

When it comes to churches, Islamic history is a testimony to Islamic doctrine. Under Muslim rule, from the seventh century to the present, tens if not hundreds of thousands of churches once spread across thousands of miles of formerly Christian lands have been attacked, plundered, ransacked, and destroyed or converted into mosques. Such a large number is consistent with the fact that, at the time of the Muslim conquests, half of the world's entire Christian population lived in those lands that were invaded and subjugated by Islam.¹¹

According to one medieval Muslim historian, over the two-year course of a particularly ruthless Christian persecution campaign, some 30,000 churches were burned or pillaged in Egypt and Syria alone.¹² In another notable church attack during Abbasid rule, in the year 936, "the Muslims in Jerusalem made a rising and burnt down the Church of the Resurrection [believed to be built atop the tomb of Christ] which they plundered, and destroyed all they could of it."¹³ Nearly a century later, Hakim bi-Amr Allah (caliph 996–1021) ordered that the already ravaged Church of the Resurrection be torn down "to its very foundations, apart from what could not be destroyed or pulled up, and they also destroyed the Golgotha and the Church of Saint Constantine and all that they contained, as well as all the sacred gravestones. They even tried to dig up the graves and wipe out all traces of their existence."¹⁴

In 924, "the Muslims of Damascus burnt down the church of Miriam [Mary] in that city; and plundered the furniture and vessels that were of very great value; they also plundered the convent of women adjoining it. . . ."¹⁵ "Marwan II (caliph 744–50) pillaged and destroyed many churches and monasteries in Egypt. Mahdi (caliph 775–85) and Harun al-Rashid (caliph 786–809), in strict accordance with Sharia law, ordered the destruction of all churches in the empire that had been built after the Islamic conquest,"¹⁶ including the church of Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem, the church of St. Mark in Egypt, and the church of St. George in Lydda.

The 1453 conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans and the subsequent attack on and defilement of the Hagia Sophia and its transformation into a mosque is perhaps the most memorable triumph of Islam over the Christian Church. But hundreds of years earlier, after the Battle of Manzikert (1076), the Seljuk Turks, originally converted to Islam as slaves, were already making Christian life under Islamic rule a terror. In fact, it is in this context that the Crusades—which have been so thoroughly distorted by modern academics to demonize Christianity and portray Muslims as victims—were called.¹⁷ In the words of Urban II (pope 1088–1099), calling for the First Crusade:

From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians [in fact, Muslim Turks]...has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; it has led away a part of the captives into its own country, and a part it has destroyed by cruel tortures; it has either entirely destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of its own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness.... What shall I say of the abominable rape of the women? To speak of it is worse than to be silent.... On whom therefore is the labor of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you? You, upon whom above other nations God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage, bodily activity, and strength....¹⁸

A PARADIGMATIC EXAMPLE: THE COPTIC CHURCH OF EGYPT

Tracing the fate of churches across the thousands of square miles of formerly Christian lands conquered by Islam is well beyond the purview of this book. Because of the strong Christian presence there, Egypt is

ideally suited to illustrate Christian persecution and dhimmi status under Islam, both past and present.

The history, or plight, of Egypt's Coptic Orthodox Church is well documented. *The History of the Patriarchate of the Egyptian Church*, for instance, a multivolume chronicle begun under Coptic Bishop Severus ibn al-Muqaffa in the tenth century, records innumerable massacres and persecutions over the centuries, from destroyed churches to crucified Christians to raped and murdered nuns. However, it can be objected that Christian writers may have been biased against their persecutors. So let us turn to the famous history of Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi (1364–1442), the most authoritative Muslim scholar of Egyptian history in the Middle Ages, and no friend to Christians. In his account, things appear relatively quiet during the first century of Islam's occupation of Egypt (c. 641–741), no doubt because of the fact that Christians still numerically overwhelmed their Muslim conquerors. (Because of the numerical superiority of the Christians in the early years after the Muslim conquest of Egypt, Copts frequently and sometimes successfully rebelled against their Islamic overlords.) Indeed, there appears to have been enough leeway that some churches were even being restored, for we read that in 735 “the Bu-Mina church outside Cairo was restored, for which reason a great multitude of Muslims rose against . . . the Emir of Egypt at that time.”¹⁹

By 767, however, “heavier hardships than ever fell upon the Christians, who were obliged to eat the[ir] dead; while their new churches in Egypt were destroyed. The church of Mary anent [next to] that of Abu Senuda in Egypt was also pulled down, as well as that in the ward of Constantine, which the Christians entreated Suliman bin Ali, Emir of Egypt, to spare for fifty thousand dinars; but he would not.”²⁰ By 845, al-Mutawakal ordered Christian churches to be pulled down. In 912, “the great church in Alexandria, known as that of the Resurrection, was burnt down.”²¹ In 939, “the Muslims made another rising in the city of Askalon, where they demolished the Greek Church of Mary, and plundered what was in it.”²²

Then we come to the era of the aforementioned Caliph Hakim bi-Amr Allah who destroyed the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. His reign was especially devastating for the Christians in Egypt. The

extent of the persecution there was described by the Muslim historian al-Maqrizi:

And in his [al-Hakim's] time, hardships such as one never saw befell the Christians.... He then laid his hands on all endowments of the churches and of the monasteries, which he confiscated to the public treasury, and wrote to that effect to all his provinces. He then burnt the wood of a great many crosses, and forbade the Christians to buy men or maid servants; he pulled down the churches that were in the street Rashida, outside the city of Misr [Old Cairo]. He then laid in ruins the churches of al-Maqs outside Cairo, and made over their contents to the people, who plundered them of more goods than can be told. He threw down the convent of al-Qosseir, and gave it to the people to sack.... He then set about demolishing all churches, and made over to the people, as prey and forfeit, all that was in them, and all that was settled on them. They were then all demolished, all their furniture and chattels were plundered, their endowments were forfeited to others, and mosques were built in their place. He allowed the call to prayer from the church of Senuda in Misr; and built a wall around the church of Mo'allaqa [the Hanging Church], in Qasr esh-Sema. Then many people [Muslims] sent up letters to request to be allowed to search the churches and monasteries in provinces of Egypt. But their request was hardly delivered, when a favorable answer was returned to the request; so they took the vessels and chattel of the churches and of the monasteries, and sold them in the market places of Egypt, together with what they found in those churches of gold and silver vessels, and things of the kind; and bartered their endowments. The emir also wrote to the intendants of the provinces to support the Muslims in their destruction of the churches and of monasteries. And the work of demolition in Egypt was so general in the year 1012, that according to statements on which one can rely, as to what was demolished at

the end of the year 1014, both in Egypt and in Syria and the provinces thereof, of temples built by the Greeks—it amounted to more than 3,000 churches [the original Arabic says 30,000].²³ All the gold and silver vessels in them were plundered, their endowments were forfeited; and those endowments were splendid and bestowed on wonderful edifices.

Finally, after describing other forms of persecutions against Christians during Hakim's reign, Maqrizi makes an interesting observation: "Under these circumstances a great many Christians became Muslims."²⁴ Maqrizi, a pious Muslim, had no great love for Egypt's Christians, and often made disparaging observations about them in his volumes. His account of their persecution is thus all the more trustworthy.

Because Hakim's persecution was so terrible and far-reaching, most modern Western historians are forced to acknowledge it. But all too often they portray it as an aberration, the action of a madman, implying that Christians suffered primarily only under his rule. Yet there is no dearth of Muslim leaders throughout the whole of Islamic history that have persecuted Christians and their churches. If Hakim is remembered as an insane tyrant, consider Caliph Harun al-Rashid, who is known in the West as a colorful, fun-loving prankster from the *Arabian Nights*. Though renowned for decidedly secular pursuits—riotous living, strong drink, and harems of concubines (to the point that a modern-day Kuwaiti women's rights activist has referred to him as a model justifying the institution of sex-slavery)—Harun al-Rashid was still pious enough "to force Christians to distinguish themselves by dress, to expel them from their positions, and to destroy their churches through the use of fatwas by the imams."²⁵ Similarly, Saladin (Salah ad-Din), another Muslim ruler who is habitually portrayed in the West as magnanimous and tolerant, commanded "whoever saw that the outside of a church was white, to cover it with black dirt," as a sign of degradation.²⁶

Indeed, in 1354, well after the "mad caliph" Hakim was gone, churches were still under attack—and not just by rulers, but by average Muslims, who, according to Maqrizi, "demolished a church anent [next

to] the Bridge of Lions, and a church in the street el-Asra in Misr, and the Church of Fahhadin within the precincts of Cairo; also the Convent of Nehya in Djizah, and a church in the neighborhood of Bataq al-Tokruni; they plundered the wealth of the churches they demolished, which was great; and carried away even the woodwork and slabs of alabaster. They rushed upon the churches of Misr and Cairo....”²⁷

Such was the state of affairs for Christian churches under the rule of many caliphs. Thus over the course of nearly fourteen centuries, former centers of Christianity such as Egypt became Muslim countries with only Christian enclaves, a few dilapidated outposts of Christianity in a sea of Muslim hostility.

And today, as Muslims reclaim their Islamic identity and heritage, to Western approval and praise, such is the state of affairs for Christian churches throughout much of the Muslim world at this very moment.

CHRISTIAN HOLIDAY, ISLAMIC HORROR

Christians in the Islamic world today are suffering attacks motivated by the very same diabolical animus as a thousand years ago under Hakim. Proof of this is that some of the most terrible assaults occur precisely on Christian holidays—Christmas, Easter, and New Year’s Eve (which is a major church day in the Middle East). And no wonder, considering that some Muslim clerics insist that “saying Merry Christmas is worse than fornication...or killing someone.”²⁸

After some fourteen centuries of church attacks and other persecution—punctuated by a brief Christian Golden Age—Egypt’s Copts began the new year in 2011 once again under assault, at one of their largest churches: during midnight Mass in the early hours of January 1, 2011, the Two Saints Coptic Church in Alexandria, crowded with hundreds of Christian worshippers, was bombed, leaving at least twenty-three dead and approximately a hundred injured. According to eyewitnesses, “body parts were strewn all over the street outside the church. The body parts were covered with newspapers until they were brought inside the church after some Muslims started stepping on them and chanting Jihadi chants,” including “Allahu Akbar!”²⁹ Witnesses further attest that “security forces

withdrew one hour before the church blast.”³⁰ And a year earlier, Muslims shot and killed six Christians as they were leaving church after celebrating the Coptic Christmas Eve midnight Mass in Nag Hammadi.³¹

December 25, 2011, was called Nigeria’s “blackest Christmas ever.”³² In a number of coordinated jihadi operations, Reuters reported, Islamic terrorists bombed several churches during Christmas liturgies, killing at least thirty-eight people, “the majority dying on the steps of a Catholic church after celebrating Christmas Mass as blood pooled in dust from a massive explosion.”³³ Charred bodies and dismembered limbs lay scattered around the destroyed church. This attack was simply a reenactment of Christmas Eve one year earlier, in 2010, when several other churches were set ablaze and Christians were attacked, also leaving nearly thirty-eight dead.³⁴ There was no reprieve for Nigeria’s Christians when the next religious holiday came; some fifty Christians were killed “when explosives concealed in two cars went off near the Assemblies of God’s Church during Easter Sunday services” in April 2012 in a predominantly Muslim region.³⁵ According to the pastor, “We were in the Holy Communion service and I was exhorting my people and all of a sudden, we heard a loud noise that shattered all our windows and doors.”³⁶ December 25, 2012, saw a repeat of the last few Christmases: in two separate attacks, Islamic gunmen shot and killed twelve Christian worshippers who had gathered for Christmas Eve church services, including one church’s pastor.³⁷

The violence in Indonesia, which has the largest Muslim population in the world, was not so bloody, but Muslims’ hostility was equally clear. In December 2012, more than two hundred Muslims threw rotten eggs at nearly one hundred Christians desiring to hold a Christmas Mass in empty land outside Jakarta, since their church, the Philadelphia Batak Protestant Church, had been illegally closed. A photographer saw angered Muslims—men, women wearing the hijab (the Muslim headscarf), and children—blocking the road and hurling rotten eggs at those attempting to worship. According to the Reverend Palti Panjaitan, the incident followed a Christmas Eve attack when “intolerant people” threw not only rotten eggs but also “plastic bags filled with urine and cow dung” at the Christians. “Everything had happened while police

were there. They were just watching without doing anything to stop them from harming us.”³⁸

The attack was a repeat of what had happened several months earlier, during an Ascension Day church service in May 2012. Then some six hundred Muslims threw bags of urine, stones, and rotten eggs at the same congregation. The mob also threatened to kill the pastor. No arrests were made. The church had applied for a permit to construct its house of worship five years ago. But pressured by local Muslims, the local administration ordered the church to shut down in December 2009—though the Supreme Court recently overruled its decision, saying the church was eligible for the permit. Regardless, local Muslims and officials demand the church cease to exist.³⁹

In the Philippines, during Mass on Christmas Day 2010, a bomb exploded inside a packed Catholic church in the “Muslim-dominated” island of Jolo, injuring six worshippers including the priest. The bomb was planted by the al-Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group, which according to the *Daily Mail* “has been blamed for several bomb attacks on the Roman Catholic cathedral in Jolo since the early 2000s and for kidnapping priests and nuns.”⁴⁰

While many more examples of church attacks on Christian holidays could be given, the four examples above demonstrate an important point. Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, and the Philippines have very little in common. These countries do not share the same language, race, or culture. What, then, do they have in common that explains this similar pattern of church attacks during Christian holy days? The answer is Islam. All four countries have large Muslim populations.

If Islamic jihadis target churches during Christian holidays, Islamic governments exploit the law to oppress Christian worship during those same holidays. For example, in December 2011 in Iran, several reports appeared indicating “a sharp increase of activities against Christians prior to Christmas by the State Security centers of the Islamic Republic.” Local churches were “ordered to cancel Christmas and New Year’s celebrations as a show of their compliance and support” for “the two-month-long mourning activities of the Shia’ Moslems” (activities which culminate with a bloody exhibition of self-mutilation and flagellation during

Ashura). Two days before Christmas 2011, state security raided an Assemblies of God's church. Most of those present, including Sunday school children, were arrested and interrogated. Hundreds of Christian books were seized. As one reporter put it, "Raids and detentions during the Christmas season are not uncommon in Iran, a Shi'a-majority country that is seen as one of the worst persecutors of religious minorities."⁴¹

Indeed, such oppression of Christians during Christmas is not uncommon throughout much of the Islamic world. In Iraq, some Muslim school teachers in Mosul's elementary and high schools scheduled exams on December 25, 2012, forcing Christian students to attend school on Christmas Day and miss Christmas Mass, "even though authorities had identified the 25th of December as an official holiday for Christians."⁴² In December 2011 in supposedly moderate Malaysia, priests and church youth leaders were required to obtain "caroling permits" by submitting their full names and identity card numbers at police stations—always a harrowing experience—simply to visit their fellow church members and sing carols like "Joy to the World" and "Silent Night." In Pakistan in 2011, Christians lamented that "extreme power outages have become routine during Christmas and Easter seasons."⁴³ In Indonesia, December 2011, after "vandals" decapitated the statue of the Virgin Mary in a small grotto days before Christmas, the "embattled" church of GKI Bogor, another Christian church that local Muslims want eliminated, was forced to move its Christmas prayers to a member's house after Islamic groups warned Christians not to meet at the site of the church.⁴⁴

Most Muslim attacks on churches today can be classified into three general categories, which sometimes intersect:

1. *Churches harassed by Muslim governments*, often by denying them the necessary permits to exist and function as churches—the sort of permits that are routinely issued to build mosques. This "red-tape" jihad works to uphold Omar's conditions for churches, specifically that new

churches may not be built and old churches may not be renovated. Even churches that have existed for decades are sometimes shut down through the refusal to renew their permits, while others are fined and penalized for merely repairing their toilets without permission.⁴⁵

2. *Churches attacked by the Muslim mob.* These account for the majority of church attacks. Muslim mobs attack churches for many and varied reasons, including the perception that churches somehow transgress *The Conditions of Omar*—by, for instance, installing offensive bells or crosses—and “retaliation” for the perceived crimes of individual Christians. Such attacks are often prompted by local Muslim preachers who regularly whip their followers into anti-Christian frenzies. Muslim mobs also use the permit pretext to attack churches and harass their congregations.
3. *Churches attacked by Muslim jihadis,* whose hyper-Islam simply cannot abide the presence of Christianity and its houses of worship, and who actively seek to express their deep-seated hatred—as typified, for instance, in the above Christian holiday terrorist attacks. Because of their premeditated nature, these attacks are usually more deadly than Muslim mob attacks, which are often impromptu.

THE LEGAL JIHAD ON CHRISTIAN CHURCHES BY MUSLIM GOVERNMENTS

Because Islamic law is clear about the status of churches—new ones are not to be built and old ones are not to be repaired—Muslim governments, do, in fact, make it next to impossible for Christian churches to be built or repaired, usually by denying them permits on any number of pretexts. This phenomenon is especially prominent in Iran and Central

Asia, where Evangelical Protestantism has taken root and is seen as a threat to the Islamic order.

Afghanistan

In October 2011, ten years after the United States invaded and “liberated” Afghanistan at a cost of more than 1,700 U.S. lives and \$440 billion in taxpayer dollars, the State Department reported that the nation’s last Christian church was destroyed in March 2010 in compliance with a court order.⁴⁶ This is unsurprising considering that the U.S.-installed Afghan government regularly upholds anti-Christian measures.

Azerbaijan

In April 2012, the Greater Grace Protestant Church in Muslim-majority Azerbaijan became “the first religious community to be liquidated by a court” since the country’s new religion law, requiring all previously registered religious institutions to re-register, “came into force in 2009.” The church, which had been registered since 1993 and had a congregation of some 500, making it one of the largest Protestant churches in the country, “was stripped of its registration at a 15-minute hearing on April 25. The decision, which was made in the absence of any church representatives, makes any activity by the church illegal and subject to punishment.”⁴⁷ In August 2012, the highest appeals court in Azerbaijan upheld the decision to close Greater Grace Church.⁴⁸ Earlier in January 2012, “a pastor was threatened with criminal proceedings following a raid on his church” during Sunday service, in which around two hundred items of Christian literature, including Bibles, were seized. He was told that “a criminal case had been launched over religious literature arousing incitement over other faiths” and was pressured by authorities to leave the area, which he did. At last report, he was traveling long distances each week in order to lead church services.⁴⁹

Iran

In February 2012, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence ordered the last two officially registered churches, Emmanuel Protestant Church and St.

Peter's Evangelical Church, to discontinue Friday Farsi-language services in Tehran—Farsi being the nation's primary language: "Friday services in Tehran attracted the city's converts to Christianity as well as Muslims interested in Christianity, as Friday is most Iranians' day off during the week."⁵⁰ Banning the churches' use of Farsi prevents Iranians from hearing the Gospel. Likewise, one month later, in March 2012, the Armenian Evangelical Church in Tehran was also ordered to discontinue holding Persian-language services on Fridays. The officers serving the notice threatened church officials, saying that "if this order is ignored ... the church building will be bombed 'as happens in Iraq every day.'"⁵¹ In June 2012, authorities ordered the closure of another church in Tehran "amid a government campaign to crack down on the few recognized churches offering Farsi-speaking services, according to a human rights group." The church originally served traditional Assyrian Christians; however, "due to an increasing number of Farsi-speaking believers—mostly MBBs [Muslim Background Believers, that is, converts to Christianity from Islam]—it [the church] has become a cause of concern for the authorities and they now ordered it to shut down."⁵² In July 2012, "both the Central Assembly of God Church in Tehran and its summer campsite," once a popular site for Christian gatherings and conferences, were closed by authorities of the Islamic Republic, who also posted a notice on the gates "warning of severe consequences should anyone try to enter the premises."⁵³ And as part of the crackdown on non-registered house church meetings, plainclothes agents of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance continued raiding, arresting, and "'aggressively' interrogating" assembled worshippers.⁵⁴

In October of 2012, security forces ransacked four underground house churches and arrested the church leaders. An Iranian propaganda media source, Fars News, described the churches as a "network of criminals" affiliated with "Zionist propaganda."⁵⁵ According to another report,

State security agents have been permanently stationed at two churches in Esfahan, Iran, in the latest effort by the Islamic regime to frighten people off Christianity. The agents constantly

interfere in the activities of St Luke's and St Paul's, and harass those present. They order the pastors around and stop church elders from talking to Muslim seekers. They also try to frighten away visitors by warning them of dire consequences if they continue attending, and create tension among the members by spreading false rumors. The children of church members are also threatened and often forbidden from attending.⁵⁶

Kazakhstan

In October 2011, majority-Muslim Kazakhstan adopted new laws in order to further inhibit freedom of religion: "All registered churches must now re-register with the government, and only churches meeting new criteria will be registered."⁵⁷ Accordingly, "police and secret agents reportedly raided a worship meeting of officially registered Protestant church New Life, saying that under the new law the congregation 'cannot meet outside its legal address.'" During the raid, a seventeen-year-old woman was beaten unconscious by a policeman.⁵⁸ In February 2012, it was reported that "churches are being raided, leaders fined and Christian literature confiscated as the Kazakh authorities enforce new laws intended further to restrict religious freedom in the country."⁵⁹ And in June 2012 authorities "forced a Methodist church to 'voluntarily' close and fined the wife of the church's Pastor." The pastor put an announcement in newspapers declaring that the church was "liquidating itself" because "we do not want more punishment from the authorities."⁶⁰ One year later, "two unrelated Protestant churches in different parts of Kazakhstan were raided in early October, reportedly over a criminal case launched 15 months ago." First, masked police raided Grace Church and seized items such as literature and electronic devices characterized as "extremist"; police also asked church affiliates to give blood samples in order to determine if the church uses "hallucinogenic" substances in the sacrament of communion. A week and a half later, a similar raid occurred on New Life Church, an establishment completely unrelated to Grace Church. "Members of both churches fear the

authorities will use the case to prevent them gaining the mandatory re-registration,” in Kazakhstan’s push to shut down Protestant churches.⁶¹

Turkmenistan

A raid on an Evangelical church was carried out in the Muslim-majority nation of Turkmenistan in June 2012: “All adult believers at the meeting were questioned about their faith and all of their Christian literature was confiscated,” only to be returned two weeks later.⁶²

Uzbekistan

In May 2012, police raided a Protestant house church meeting in Uzbekistan, claiming that a bomb was in the home. No bomb was found, only Christian literature, which was confiscated and which a judge ordered to be destroyed. Subsequently, fourteen members of the unregistered church were heavily fined—between ten and sixty times a month’s salary—for an “unsanctioned meeting in a private home.”⁶³ Between “February and April, 28 Protestants were fined and four warned” for the offense,⁶⁴ with three Baptists also being fined for not declaring their personal Bibles while crossing the border from Kazakhstan into Uzbekistan. Fines and warnings were accompanied by the confiscation of religious literature.⁶⁵

And the same pattern continues throughout the Arab world—from Algeria in the west to Kuwait in the east.

Algeria

In May 2011, seven Algerian churches, accused of being unregistered and operating illegally, were threatened with closure. “Registration is required under controversial Ordinance 06-03, but Christians report the government refuses to respond to or grant their applications for registration. The controversial law was introduced in 2006 to regulate non-Muslim worship.” In 2008, the government applied measures in accordance with Ordinance 06-03 to limit the activities of non-Muslim groups, ordering the closure of twenty-six churches in one region alone because they were not registered. According to local church members,

“authorities apply the law when they want to harass churches: ‘It’s always the same thing. . . . They use this law when they want to pester us.’”⁶⁶

The Palestinian Authority

In March 2012, one week after the prime minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA) told an audience of Evangelicals that “his government respected the rights of its Christian minorities,” the PA declared a Baptist Church unlawful and added that birth, wedding, and death certificates from the church were henceforth invalid. A pastor noted that “animosity towards the Christian minority in areas controlled by the PA continues to get increasingly worse. People are always telling [Christians], ‘Convert to Islam. Convert to Islam. It’s the true and right religion.’”⁶⁷

Kuwait

In November 2010, the Kuwait City Municipal Council rejected a permit request for the construction of a Greek Catholic church in a southern Kuwaiti region known as al-Mahboula.⁶⁸ In February 2012, Osama al-Munawer, a Kuwaiti parliamentarian, announced that he would submit a draft law prohibiting church construction. Prior to this announcement, al-Munawer had called for the “removal of all churches in Kuwait” on Twitter. (However, he later “clarified that existing churches can remain, but the construction of new non-Islamic places of worship should be banned.”)⁶⁹

This incident in Kuwait helped precipitate a series of events that further evinced Islam’s innate hostility to churches. One month after the Kuwaiti parliamentarian announced his plans to ban all churches, a Kuwaiti delegation was sent to Saudi Arabia to ask its Grand Mufti—the highest Islamic law authority in the Arabian Peninsula, the birthplace of Islam—what Sharia’s position on Christian churches was. It was then that the Grand Mufti declared that it is “necessary to destroy all the churches of the region,” stressing that Kuwait is a part of the Arabian Peninsula and therefore must abide by the Muslim prophet’s deathbed wish to drive all non-Muslims away from the Peninsula.⁷⁰

Two months after the Saudi Grand Mufti issued his edict, villa churches serving Western foreigners in Kuwait were targeted.⁷¹ One congregation was evicted without explanation “from a private villa used for worship gatherings for the past seven years.” Another villa church was ordered to “pay an exorbitant fine each month to use a facility it had been renting. . . . Church leaders reportedly decided not to argue and moved out.” Similarly, in July 2012, although approval had already been issued for the construction of a church in the region of Jleeb al-Shuyoukh, a group of Islamic preachers protested, arguing that churches should not be permitted to be built in “Islamic countries particularly in the Arabian Peninsula.” One sheikh “expressed displeasure” against those approving the construction of the church, “stressing that it is not permissible as per the Sharia,” adding that “excuses” such as saying that “it is a matter of human rights and international norms to build it, is not acceptable, as Islam comes first, and people should respect religion first before serving humanity or anything else.”⁷²

Bahrain

Such sentiments are now common even in little Bahrain, long considered the most tolerant nation in the Arabian Peninsula, with a 30 percent non-Muslim population of foreign workers, mostly Americans and Europeans. In September 2012, Sunni clerics strongly opposed the planned construction of a Catholic church, “in a rare open challenge of the country’s Sunni king.” “More than 70 clerics signed a petition last week saying it was forbidden to build churches in the Arabian Peninsula, the birthplace of Islam. . . . Prominent cleric, Sheik Adel Hassan al-Hamad, proclaimed. . . ‘anyone who believes that a church is a true place of worship is someone who has broken in their faith in God.’”⁷³

Spotlight on Indonesia

The one East Asian nation that has a Muslim majority—indeed, it has the largest Muslim population in the world—is also the one East Asian nation where churches are openly under attack. Indonesia offers the best examples of Muslim mobs using the permit pretext to eliminate churches—even when, ironically, the government, via the courts, actually sides with the churches, saying they are legally registered.

The ongoing saga of the GKI Yasmin Church in Bogor is particularly illustrative of how Sharia law's draconian approach to churches trumps Indonesian law. At least as early as 2008, local Muslims and officials began complaining about the church's existence, subsequently closing it, even though it was already fully registered. In December 2010, the Supreme Court ordered the church to be reopened, but the Bogor mayor refuses to comply, keeping it sealed off. At the start, the congregation continued to hold Sunday services on the sidewalk outside their sealed church, often to jeers and attacks by Muslim mobs. Later, members began to meet at private homes. Not satisfied, local Muslims searched out and found one of these private homes where members were congregating and prevented them from worshipping there as well: "It crosses the line now. The protesters now come to the residential area, which is not a public place," observed one politician sympathetic to the Christians.⁷⁴

The GKI Yasmin Church's ordeals continue. Islamic gunmen opened fire on it, damaging the church building. A sticker on the back of a church member's car saying "We need a friendly Islam, not an angry Islam," prompted another attack on the church: scores of Muslims "terrorized the congregation and attacked several church members."⁷⁵

Most recently, the Muslim mayor who illegally sealed the church off has agreed to reopen it—but only if a mosque is built directly next door, to ensure the continued oppression of the church. As one report notes, "The church has faced hostility from local Muslims, who have rallied against them, blocked them from accessing the street where the church is situated and disrupted their outdoor services. It is unlikely that they will suddenly embrace the Christians' presence."⁷⁶

In April 2012, yet another Protestant congregation in Indonesia, the Philadelphia Congregation in Bekasi—whose church had been illegally sealed off by authorities despite meeting all requirements for a permit—was met with violent opposition from Muslims for trying to hold a service on the street in front of the closed church building. Muslim residents made death threats, played loud music, and even rode a motorcycle through the congregation. A church spokesman stated, "We are constantly having to change our location because our existence appears

to be unwanted, and we have to hide so that we are not intimidated by intolerant groups.... We had hoped for help from the police, but after many attacks on members of the congregation, we see that the police are also involved in this.”⁷⁷

In the province of West Java, an “Islamic extremist” group pushed hard to have five churches demolished—claiming that their existence was illegal—and in May 2012, following protests “by hard-line groups including the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI),” authorities sealed off nearly twenty Christian houses of worship under the pretext that they did not have the required permits.⁷⁸ Authorities have said that only one church may be built in the district in question—for the region’s *twenty thousand* Christians.

In June 2012, a Muslim mob of three hundred wrecked a store that was being used for a Sunday church service, saying that it “had not obtained permission to hold Mass.” The mob caused damage to the windows and some furniture on the first floor of the store. Police stopped them before they reached the third floor, where some sixty Christians were huddled. None of the Muslims was arrested, but twelve Christians were taken into custody for questioning.⁷⁹ Around the same time, in compliance to calls from Islamic clerics, authorities allegedly ordered another twenty churches to be shut down. They had already closed sixteen smaller Christian places of worship, also storefronts, in the same district. At the time of this writing, many of these congregations were still defiantly holding services inside their sealed-off buildings, with members standing guard outside.

In August 2012, in West Java, a “large tent used for services by St. Johannes Baptista Church in Bogor was sealed off by authorities. The tent had been used by the congregation since 2006 as a temporary location while waiting for a permit to utilize a building; they had applied for the permit six years earlier. Police threatened to tear the tent down if the Christians continued to use it. According to *Religion Today*, the leader of the church says the hostility is linked to the size and growth of the congregation, currently numbering around five hundred.”⁸⁰

Days earlier in West Java, Muslim protesters, claiming that a Batak Karo Protestant church was operating without a permit, forced it to shut

down during a Sunday worship service. The church's committee secretary said the church has the necessary permits to hold services, yet "the majority of the people still reject the church's activity."⁸¹

In December 2010, some two hundred demonstrators from "hard-line Islamic organizations in West Java disrupted the worship" of another Protestant church, forcefully driving more than a hundred Christian worshippers out of the building. "Because they were fearful, children and women were crying when they came out of their place of worship," explained the pastor. A police unit sealed off the building, leaving other congregations that had used the same building also without a place to worship.⁸² Islamic protestors further disrupted the worship of six other house churches on the same day, including the Indonesian Evangelical Tabernacle Church, the Pentecostal Tabernacle Church, and the Church of Pentecost-Rancaekek.

Most recently in Indonesia, things have only gotten worse. In October 2012 "unknown assailants" set fire to the Madele Pentecostal Church in the city of Poso, pouring gasoline over a collection box and setting it aflame. Weeks earlier in the same region, Christian homes were attacked and bombed. And two law enforcement agents who were investigating a recent attack on the Christian community were found murdered, their corpses dumped near an "extremist Muslim group's training ground."⁸³ Because Poso has a large Christian population, Muslim attacks are frequent, one of the most notorious incidents being the 2005 beheading of three Christian girls en route to school.⁸⁴ Meanwhile in Aceh, Indonesian officials, once again using the permit pretext, shut down nine Christian house churches and six Buddhist temples, arguing that homes cannot be used "for religious ceremonies or functions." According to the report, "Local Muslim extremists welcomed the decision. Yusuf Al-Qardhawy, head of the Aceh branch of the Islamic Defense Front (FPI), called on other jurisdictions to follow Banda Aceh, enforce Islamic law and stop any non-Muslim worship activity that is not approved." The province of Aceh is also the only one "which is subject to Sharia. Compliance is ensured by the morality police, a special force that punishes violations in dress and behavior."⁸⁵

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES HELD HOSTAGE BY THE MUSLIM MOB

While *The Conditions of Omar* focus on denying the building of new churches and denying the renovation of old ones, they promise churches protection only on the condition that no restriction imposed on Christians be violated. After naming any number of other restrictions—against displaying crosses, ringing bells, singing loudly, not proselytizing Muslims, and preventing fellow Christians from converting to Islam—*The Conditions of Omar* concludes with Christians agreeing that “if we change or contradict these conditions imposed upon ourselves . . . we forfeit our dhimma [covenant], and we become liable to the same treatment you inflict upon the people who resist and cause sedition.” Accordingly, throughout Islamic history to the present moment, wherever Christians are accused of breaking Sharia’s dhimmi laws, churches—always the most obvious and vulnerable representation of Christianity—are first to be attacked in retribution by the Muslim mob. As one writer explaining the status of churches in the Middle East after the Islamic invasions puts it: “They were often burned or demolished in the course of reprisals against infidels found guilty of overstepping their rights.”⁸⁶ For some fourteen centuries, Christian churches have been treated as hostages to guarantee good (that is, submissive) Christian behavior, an arrangement that is enshrined in the ominous conclusion of Omar’s *Conditions*.

Spotlight on Egypt

Egypt provides an abundance of evidence for this phenomenon—unsurprisingly, considering that Islamic officials in Egypt, following Ibn Taymiyya, see the church as “houses of torment and fire” that are “worse than bars and brothels.” In August 2009, Dar al-Ifta issued a fatwa not only banning the building of new churches but likening the building of a church to “a nightclub, a gambling casino . . . the alcohol industry or . . . a barn for rearing pigs, cats or dogs.”⁸⁷ In July 2012, Dr. Yassir al-Burhami, a leading member of Egypt’s Salafi movement, issued a fatwa forbidding Muslim bus and taxi drivers from accepting Coptic Christian priests as

passengers; he depicted driving a priest to church as “more forbidden than taking someone to a liquor bar.”⁸⁸

The story of St. George Coptic Church in Edfu is especially instructive of the plight of churches in Egypt. Built nearly a century ago, during the Christian “Golden Age,” St. George was so dilapidated that the local council and governor actually approved its renovation and signed off on the design. Soon local Muslims began complaining, demanding that the church be devoid of crosses and bells—as stipulated by *The Conditions of Omar*—because they were “irritating Muslims and their children.”⁸⁹ Leaders even insisted that the very dome of the church be removed. Arguing that removal of the dome would likely collapse the church, the bishop refused. The foreboding cries of “Allahu Akbar!” began; Muslims threatened to raze the church and build a mosque in its place. Copts were “forbidden to leave their homes or buy food until they remove the dome of St. George’s Church.”⁹⁰

Then, after Friday prayers on September 30, 2011, some three thousand Muslims went on a rampage, torched the church, and ransacked the dome. Rioting Muslims also set fire to nearby Christian homes. According to Christian eyewitnesses, security just “stood there watching.”⁹¹ In fact, Edfu’s Intelligence Unit chief was seen directing the mob destroying the church. The governor who had approved the renovation appeared on state television and “denied any church being torched,” calling it a “guest home”—a common tactic to minimize the destruction of churches. He even justified the incident by arguing that the church contractor made the building three meters higher than permitted: “Copts made a mistake and had to be punished, and Muslims did nothing but set things right, end of story,” he proclaimed on TV.⁹²

It was this incident that caused Egypt’s Christians to protest in October 2011, leading to the Maspero Massacre, in which the Egyptian military intentionally targeted and killed dozens of Christian protesters, running some over with armored vehicles—and state media lied, portraying the Christians as the aggressors and the military as the victim.

The destruction of St. George Church was far from unprecedented; rather, it was simply the last of a number of consecutive church attacks in the previous weeks and months—the straw that broke the Coptic back,

hence the mass protest at Maspero. Just a few months earlier, in March 2011, a Muslim mob attacked the local Church of the Two Martyrs in Soul, south of Cairo, burning it down as a Muslim prayer leader called on Muslims to “kill all the Christians.” Adding insult to injury, the attackers played “soccer” with the ancient relics of the church’s saints and martyrs. Afterwards, throngs of Muslims gathered around the scorched building where they spent some twenty hours pounding its walls down with sledgehammers to cries of “Allahu Akbar.”⁹³

Neither the military nor state security appeared—even though this was all happening near Cairo, Egypt’s capital, not some inaccessible village. After demolishing the Church of the Two Martyrs, a group of Muslims held prayers at the site and began making plans to build a mosque atop the destroyed church—a live reenactment of Islamic history almost identical to the examples recorded centuries earlier by the Egyptian historian Maqrizi and others. Because of the attack, Copts in Soul fled to adjacent villages. Christian women who remained in the region were sexually assaulted.

Two months later, in May 2011, throngs of Muslims, estimated at three thousand, fired guns and rifles and hurled Molotov cocktails at Coptic churches, homes, and businesses in the Imbaba region near Cairo. Twelve Christians were killed, some by snipers shooting from rooftops. More than two hundred were injured. Three churches were set aflame to cries of “Allahu Akbar,” while Coptic homes were looted and torched. As usual, Egyptian authorities did little to stop this rampage, showing up nearly five hours after it began, providing ample time for Muslims to terrorize the Copts. One priest said, “I called everyone, but no one bothered to come.... I mourn all those young people who died.”⁹⁴ The pretext for this particular attack was that a Christian girl had converted to Islam and the Coptic Church had allegedly responded by abducting and torturing her into renouncing Islam. Muslims found this scenario believable because that is precisely what Islam requires Muslims to do to female apostates who convert to Christianity, as we shall see.

Also in May 2011, “hundreds of Muslims angered by the prospect of a government-closed church re-opening in their neighborhood protested outside the church, causing the provisional military authority to

back away from its promise to allow Orthodox clergy to reopen it.” Before its scheduled reopening, the Church of the Virgin Mary and St. Abraam in Ain Shams, located in an impoverished region of northeastern Cairo, was surrounded by Muslims, who trapped several priests inside and prevented others from entering the edifice. Fighting between Copts and Muslims led to the injury and arrest of the Copts.⁹⁵ As is usual in these incidents, the non-Muslim victims were the ones in trouble with the authorities.

In June 2011, hundreds of Muslims surrounded another St. George Church, south of Minya, threatening to kill its priest—who was locked inside celebrating morning Mass. The Muslims cried, “‘We will kill the priest, we will kill him and no one will prevent us,’” adding that they would “‘cut him to pieces.’” As usual, police and security forces gave the terrorists ample time to terrorize—appearing a full five hours after the incident began. When they escorted the priest out, it “looked as if he was the criminal, leaving his church in a police car.”⁹⁶ Several different reasons were given for this attack, from claims that the priest had earlier tried to make renovations to the hundred-year old church to claims that he had refused demands from local Muslims that the Christians in the region must pay *jizya*, the tribute required of non-Muslims under Sharia law.⁹⁷

In July 2011, another Muslim mob went on a violent spree, attacking Christians, including a five-months-pregnant woman who was “beaten with iron rods and pipes... ‘The real reason behind this assault was the church bell, which has greatly angered the Muslims in the village.... This is the first time such an incident has taken place in this village,’ said Father Estephanos, ‘which is 60–75 percent Christian, and the reason is definitely the presence of the church bell.’”⁹⁸ According to *The Conditions of Omar*, church bells are forbidden.

Similarly, in October 2011, in the Upper Egyptian village of Elmadmar, which only has two churches to serve fifteen thousand Christians, a Muslim mob with a “No to the Church” banner surrounded one St. Mary’s Church, throwing bricks at it and attempting to demolish it. According to the priest, the church had approval to operate, but “its license is still pending.... Muslims claim that we hold a mass every day

at 4:00 PM, and we ring the church bell, which the church does not have, besides singing hymns, which they claim disturbs them.”⁹⁹

In January 2012, before a bishop was going to celebrate Epiphany Mass in the Abu Makka church, several Muslims, mostly Salafis and Muslim Brotherhood members, entered the building, saying that the church had no permit and no Christian should be permitted to pray in it. One Muslim was heard to remark that the building “would be suitable for a Muslim mosque.”¹⁰⁰

In February 2012, thousands of Muslims attacked a Coptic church, demanding the death of its pastor, who, along with “nearly 100 terrorized Copts sought refuge inside the church, while Muslim rioters were pelting the church with stones in an effort to break into the church, assault the Copts and torch the building.” Their motivation was that a Christian girl, who, according to Sharia law, had automatically become a Muslim when her father converted to Islam, had fled her father and was rumored to be hiding in the church. Again, one is reminded that *The Conditions of Omar* stipulate that Christians shall not prevent any of their family members from converting to Islam—or in this case, aid a hapless Christian who suddenly found herself Muslim.¹⁰¹

Then in March 2012, some fifteen hundred Muslims—some armed with swords and knives and shouting Islamic slogans—terrorized the Notre Dame Language School in Upper Egypt in response to false claims from local mosques that the private school was building a church. Two nuns were besieged in the school’s guesthouse for some eight hours by a murderous mob threatening to burn them alive. One nun suffered a “‘major’ nervous breakdown” requiring hospitalization. The entire property was ransacked and looted. The next day the Muslims returned and terrorized the children. Consequently, school attendance “has dropped by at least one third.”¹⁰² Later, during a “‘reconciliation meeting,’” the offers of the leaders of the sword-waving mob proved to be “nothing less than an attempt at legalized extortion.” In exchange for peace, Muslim leaders demanded that the school sign over land that includes the guesthouse they attacked. As many human rights groups maintain, such meetings are “just a way to pressure powerless groups

and people into giving away what little rights they have.”¹⁰³ Similarly, in June 2011, eight Christian homes were torched on the rumor that a church was being built.¹⁰⁴

In September 2012, Qadr al-Dubara in Egypt, the largest Evangelical church in the Middle East, was besieged by “unknown people” hurling “stones and gas bombs.” The first gas bomb thrown at the church was called an error by police, but it was soon followed by other bomb attacks, which continued all throughout the night and into morning. Christians locked themselves inside the church and put on masks to avoid gas poisoning. Some of those trapped inside sought help by trying to contact politicians, journalists, and even the Muslim Brotherhood. All the latter did was announce on TV that the attackers were not Brotherhood members. After the besiegers left and the trapped Christians finally came out, not a single police or security agent could be found.¹⁰⁵

In October 2012, another group of Muslims, led by Mostafa Kamel, a prosecutor in the Alexandria Criminal Court, broke into the Church of St. Mary in Rashid near Alexandria and proceeded to destroy its altar. Kamel claimed that he had bought the ninth-century church, when in fact it had been sold—but not to him. Greek Christians had sold the church to Coptic Christians because of the Greeks’ dwindling numbers in Egypt. Two priests, Father Maximos and Father Luke, rushed to the police station for aid. Kamel and his two sons also came to the police station, where they openly threatened to kill the two priests and their lawyer. Said Father Maximos, “We stayed at the police station for over six hours with the police begging prosecutor Kamel and his two sons not to demolish the church.” Father Luke said that the prosecutor had earlier lost all the cases he brought against the church, “So when this route failed, he tried taking the matter into his own hands.”¹⁰⁶

In June 2012, because many visiting Christians came to attend Divine Liturgy, Muslims surrounded St. Lyons Coptic Church during the service “demanding that the visiting Copts leave the church before the completion of prayers, and threatening to burn down the church if their demand was not met.” The priest asked the police for aid, only to be told to comply with the Muslims’ wishes—“and do not let buses with visitors

come to the church anymore.” Christian worshippers exited halfway through Mass to insults outside. As they drove away, Muslims threw rocks at the passing buses.¹⁰⁷

The same story was repeated in October 2012 when a Muslim mob consisting mostly of Salafis surrounded the St. George Church in the Beni Suef Governorate. Armed with batons, they assaulted Christians as they exited the church after Sunday Mass, leaving five hospitalized with broken limbs. The Salafi grievance was that Christians from neighboring villages—who have no local churches to serve them—were traveling to St. George. The priest could not go out of church for hours after Mass, even though he contacted police, who came only after a prominent Coptic lawyer complained to the Ministry of Interior about the lack of response from police, saying “I want the whole world to know . . . that a priest and his congregation are presently held captives in their church, afraid of the Salafi Muslims surrounding the church.”¹⁰⁸

The Muslim propensity for complicating Christians’ lives by, for example, not allowing them to enter churches out of their own (churchless) jurisdictions is grounded in Muhammad’s command to Muslims: “Do not initiate the Salam [peace greeting] to the Jews and Christians, and if you meet any of them in a road, force them to its narrowest alley,”¹⁰⁹ which has always been interpreted to mean that Muslims should make things hard on dhimmis.

Lest it appear that Muslim mob attacks on churches—whether in response to a perceived transgression of *The Conditions of Omar* or out of sheer hate—are limited to Egypt, here are a number of recent examples from around the Muslim world. The countries in which these atrocities occurred share neither race, ethnicity, language, nor culture—but only Islam:

Algeria

Armed men raided and ransacked the Protestant Church of Ouargla, Algeria, (formally recognized since 1958), dismantling the crucifix above the premises. The pastor and his family, who were trapped inside, feared

that “they could kill us.” The pastor “has been repeatedly threatened and attacked since being ordained as pastor in 2007. In the summer of 2009 his wife was beaten and seriously injured by a group of unknown men. Then, in late 2011, heaps of trash were thrown over the compound walls while an angry mob shouted death threats.”¹¹⁰

Ethiopia

In March 2011, after a Christian was accused of desecrating a Koran, thousands of Christians were forced to flee their homes in western Ethiopia when Muslim majorities set fire to roughly fifty churches and many Christian homes. Sources claim at least one Christian was killed, many more were severely injured, and from three to ten thousand were displaced by the Muslim raids and riots.¹¹¹ And in November 2011 five hundred Muslim students, aided by Muslim police, burned down the St. Arsema Orthodox Church to cries of “Allahu Akbar!” Although the church was built on land that had been used by Christians for more than six decades, a court had just ruled that it “was built without a permit,” thereby giving local Muslims an excuse to set it aflame.¹¹²

India

In April 2012 Muslims stormed and terrorized a house church in India where a Christian prayer meeting was being held, beating the Christians, including a sixty-five-year-old widow. The Muslims “called them pagans as they kicked, slapped and pushed the Christians.... ‘The Christians were running in all directions for their lives, including the children who were crying in fear,’” even as one Muslim, “brandishing a sickle, chased many of them, ‘hurling all kinds of insults and attempting to murder them all....’ Five hundred Muslims had gathered and were watching in amusement as the extremists chased and harassed the Christians for about 90 minutes.”¹¹³

Kashmir

In May 2012 Muslims torched a 119-year-old Kashmiri church. The local bishop “said that the Muslim fundamentalists want Christians to leave the state.... He said that the church had filed a case with the police

but had been advised not to ‘play up’ such incidents.” Christian minorities “are coming under growing threat from Kashmir’s Muslim majority. A Christian human rights group in India said that over 400 Christians have been displaced as a result.”¹¹⁴ Around the same time, a Catholic church made entirely of wood was partially destroyed after unknown assailants set it on fire. “What happened is not an isolated case,” said the president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, as it followed the persecution of a pastor who baptized Muslims: “With these gestures, the Muslim community is trying to intimidate the Christian minority.”¹¹⁵

Spotlight on Pakistan

In January 2012 in Pakistan, enraged by the voices of children singing Christian carols at the Philadelphia Pentecostal Church, Muslims praying in a nearby mosque decided to silence them—using an axe: “The children were preparing for mass to be celebrated the next day which was a Sunday. The loud cheers became terrified whimpers when suddenly four men, one of them with an axe, barged into the church. The men slapped the children, wrecked the furniture, smashed the microphone on to the floor and kicked the altar. ‘You are disturbing our prayers. We can’t pray properly. How dare you use the mike and speakers?’”¹¹⁶ As *The Conditions of Omar* clearly states, Christians are “Not to clang our cymbals except lightly and from the innermost recesses of our churches...nor raise our voices during prayer or readings in our churches anywhere near Muslims.”

In October 2012 the Catholic Church of St. Francis, the oldest of the Archdiocese of Karachi, was attacked by a Muslim mob of six hundred. According to a priest, “Fr. Victor had just finished celebrating a wedding, when he heard noises and shouting from the compound of the church. Immediately all the faithful, women and children were sent to the parish house. The radicals, shouting against the Christians, broke into the building and started devastating everything: cars, bikes, vases of flowers. They broke an aedicule and took the statue of the Madonna. They tried to force the door of the church, throwing stones at the church and destroying the windows.” Police did not arrive until an hour later, giving the terrorists plenty of time to wreak havoc. The Archbishop of Karachi

lamented that “the church of San Francesco has always served the poor with a school and a medical clinic run by nuns. For nearly 80 years it carries out a humble service to humanity without any discrimination of caste, ethnicity or religion. Why these acts? Why are we not safe?”¹¹⁷

In February 2012 a dozen armed Muslims stormed Grace Ministry Church, seriously wounding two Christians: one man was shot and left in critical condition, the other had to have his arm amputated. And another church member was thrown from the roof after being struck repeatedly with a rifle butt. “The extremist raid was sparked by charges that [the] church was trying to evangelize Muslims in an attempt to convert them to Christianity. The community several times in the past has been the subject of assault and the pastor and his family the subject of death threats.” As usual, the police, instead of pursuing the perpetrators, opened an investigation against the victims—the pastor and twenty other church members.¹¹⁸

In August 2011, two churches were set aflame and burned to the ground. Officials downplayed these attacks, saying that the churches were “only made of board.”¹¹⁹ Around the same time, Bogor Mayor Diani Budiarto proclaimed that churches cannot be built on streets with Muslim names.¹²⁰

In March 2011, as Christians were celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Salvation Army church in Hyderabad, a group of Muslim youths gathered outside the building and started playing loud music and harassing Christian women as they arrived. Four Christian men came out of the church building to stop the Muslims from harassing the women. The Muslims left for a short time and returned with handguns. They murdered two of the Christian men and seriously wounded the other two.¹²¹

Tunisia

In May 2012 in Tunisia, the country where the “Arab Spring” began—a country traditionally seen as one of the most moderate Arab nations—it was revealed that the Christian Orthodox Church in Tunis, one of very few churches in the nation, was being “abused” and receiving “threatening messages.” Church members were described as “living

in a state of terror,” so that the Russian ambassador in Tunis specifically requested the nation’s Ministry of Interior to “protect the church.” The abuse got to the point where “Salafis covered the cross of the church with garbage bags, telling the church members that they do not wish to see the vision of the Cross anywhere in the Islamic state of Tunisia.”¹²² In a separate incident, a Muslim burst into another church to present a message from an Islamist party “inviting the archpriest to convert to Islam or to take down the church’s crosses and pay ‘jizya’, the tribute that Islamic law requires subjugated non-Muslims to pay.”¹²³ And in September 2011, around twenty Muslims attempted to transform a Christian basilica into a mosque “in an ominous sign of the growing threat to the country’s small Church in the wake of the revolution.” The police dispersed them, but “they have been invited to make an official request to the faith ministry” to transform the church into a mosque.¹²⁴

Tanzania

On the 99-percent-Muslim island of Zanzibar, part of the United Republic of Tanzania, the very few churches serving the Christians who make up only 1 percent of the population are under attack. In late 2011 Muslims destroyed two churches—one was torched and the other torn down—all to yells of “Allahu Akbar.” The first church, the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa, was “reduced to ashes” by the fire. As the Muslim assailants fled the scene, they could be heard saying “We do not want a church in this area!” No arrests were made. The church’s bishop said, “The Muslims are burning our church buildings quite frequently here in Zanzibar, but the government is not speaking against this kind of destruction of our church premises.”¹²⁵ The other church, Siloam Church, was demolished by a throng of Muslims numbering more than one hundred. They entered the church building with clubs, hammers, torches, and swords, chanting “Allahu Akbar,” and demolished it in about three hours. Earlier a Muslim was heard saying, “We are not comfortable with the existence of the Siloam Church—this church is growing...”¹²⁶

According to Reuters, in May 2012 hundreds of Muslims set two more churches on fire during protests after members of an Islamist movement known as the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation were arrested.¹²⁷ In July 2012, Muslims burned down yet another two churches, to cries of “away with the church—we do not want infidels to spoil our community” and vows not to befriend “infidels.” The pastor of one of the churches, Evangelical Assemblies of God, said, “Tomorrow is Sunday, and my members numbering forty will not have any place to worship.” With “fear in his voice,” the pastor added, “We have reported the case to the police station. I hope justice will be done.” Likewise, the pastor of Free Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Africa—where forty-five seats were destroyed by fire—said, “I have thirty-six members, and it will be very difficult for them to congregate tomorrow. The members are afraid, not knowing what other plans the Muslims are out to do. We request prayers at this trying moment.”¹²⁸

In October 2012 Muslim mobs burned several church buildings in different parts of Tanzania after an argument between two children about the supernatural powers of the Koran allegedly led a Christian boy to desecrate Islam’s holy book. Two church buildings in Kigoma were set on fire and another’s roof was destroyed. On Zanzibar, Muslim rioters completely destroyed a building under the management of the Evangelical Assemblies of God. And in Dar es Salaam, three more church buildings were set on fire and another was ruined beyond repair. “We shall continue attacking the churches until they are no more in Tanzania’” was the slogan repeated in Tanzanian mosques.¹²⁹

On Christmas Day 2012 the Reverend Ambrose Mkenda, a Roman Catholic priest, was shot “through his cheeks” by two motorcyclists and grievously injured. Members of the Association for Islamic Mobilization and Propagation, also known as the “Awakening,” who had previously threatened local Christians because of the alleged Koran desecration, are believed to be responsible. As of December 27, the priest’s health had further deteriorated and he was in intensive care.¹³⁰

THE VIOLENT JIHAD ON CHRISTIAN CHURCHES BY MUSLIM TERRORISTS

Church attacks by jihadi organizations are more systematic and deadly than church attacks by angry Muslim mobs. While church attacks by Muslim mobs are generally spontaneous—they often erupt on Fridays after anti-Christian mosque sermons and rely on whatever weapons are at hand, such as fire and Molotov cocktails—jihadis intentionally target churches during Sunday services or, as in the Christmas holiday examples discussed above, when churches are packed with worshippers celebrating their holy days. For maximum casualties, jihadis make use of more advanced weaponry, including explosive devices and machine guns.

Such jihadi attacks on churches are taking place around much of the Islamic world, wherever there are churches. Along with the especially deadly assaults already mentioned—including the Egyptian New Year attack in 2011, which left twenty-three worshippers dead—one of the most dramatic assaults occurred on October 31, 2010, in Baghdad, Iraq, when the Our Lady of Salvation Church was attacked during Sunday Mass. At least fifty-eight Christians, including two priests, were slaughtered, and nearly a hundred were wounded (many losing their arms or legs) by al-Qaeda affiliated suicide-bombers whose vests were “filled with ball bearings to kill as many people as possible,” reported the *New York Times*.¹³¹ The Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella group of insurgents, later boasted of the attack in an Internet posting, calling the church the “‘dirty den of idolatry.’”¹³² This late 2010 attack was hardly the first or last Iraqi church attack. In fact, the Our Lady of Salvation church was one of six churches that had already been bombed earlier, in August 2004, soon after Saddam Hussein was ousted and the jihad was set loose.

Today, Christians are an all-but-extinct species in Iraq—more than half of them have fled—and what few churches remain are still under attack. On August 2, 2011, a car bomb exploded outside the Holy Family Syrian Catholic Church in the city of Kirkuk, inflicting injuries on almost two dozen people and damaging the church and nearby homes, according to the *Voice of America*.¹³³ On the same day another bomb

placed in a car parked near a Presbyterian church was defused before it went off. Less than two weeks later, yet another bomb exploded near the St. Ephraim Syrian Orthodox Church in Kirkuk. No one was killed, but the church was severely damaged.¹³⁴ And in March 2012 it was reported that, though another Kirkuk church had recently been restored after a 2006 bomb attack that killed a thirteen-year-old Christian boy, the “reopening celebration was but a brief respite in the ongoing suffering of Iraq’s Christian community, signaled by two further attacks”—including one on another church in Baghdad that was bombed, killing two guards and injuring five others.¹³⁵

The same kind of persecution has recently come to Syria. In October 2012, two churches were attacked. One bomb was detonated near the historical gate of Bab Touma (“Thomas’s Doorway”) in an area largely populated by the nation’s Christian minority. The bomb exploded as people were going to their churches for Sunday Mass; as many as ten people were killed. “‘Terrorists are doing this,’” said George, a Christian resident.¹³⁶ Also in October a car bomb exploded “in front of the only Syriac Orthodox Church in the town of Deir Ezzor. . . .” Five people near the church were killed. In September, the same church was defiled and robbed by armed intruders.¹³⁷

In November 2012, the historic Arabic Evangelical Church of Aleppo was mined and blown up “by armed men, for pure sectarian hatred,” according to its pastor, Ibrahim Nasir, who expressed “bitterness and sadness of all Syrian citizens” for an act that makes Christians “inconsolable. . . . Today is the day when we cry out to Christ to say: my God, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”¹³⁸ Later in the same month, another bomb exploded near the Syriac Orthodox Church in Aleppo: “Scores of people were injured and killed. Estimates put the number killed between 20 and 80. The bomb damaged the al-Kalima school and the Syrian French Hospital, as well as a nursing home. This is the third attack in four weeks in the New Assyrian Quarter in Aleppo.”¹³⁹

In Libya, where rebels recently took over, thanks to U.S. support, an explosion caused extensive damage to a Coptic Christian church near

the city of Misrata—where former rebels hold a major checkpoint—on Saturday, December 30, killing two people and wounding two others. Two months later, armed Muslims assaulted another Coptic church in Benghazi, injuring the priest and his assistant.¹⁴⁰

The jihad has even returned to the only Christian-majority nation in the Middle East: Lebanon. In July 2012, before the Maronite Patriarch visited Akkar, flyers signed by the “Soldiers of the Great Prophet” made anti-Christian threats in what was once the safest Middle East country for Christians, calling “on the infidels to stop their blasphemy.... We will start from the infidel’s church in Akkar and we won’t stop...this is not the end but the beginning.”¹⁴¹ Two months later, in September 2012, two “unknown assailants” opened fire on the St. Joseph Church in the town of Bqosta near Sidon, damaging the building’s windows.¹⁴²

Even in the easternmost fringes of the Islamic world, jihadis are targeting churches. In September 2011 in Indonesia, a Muslim suicide-bomber attacked Bethel Bible Church when it was packed during a service, killing himself and two others and wounding at least twenty worshippers—some critically.¹⁴³ Security received advance warning but, as is typical in Muslim-majority nations, simply left their posts at the time of the attack.¹⁴⁴ A jihadi involved in the planning of this attack later confessed that he was operating under his jihad leader’s orders, “based on the Koran and Sunnah of the Prophet, in the effort to achieve the implementation of Sharia.”¹⁴⁵

Spotlight on Nigeria

But no region is more representative of the jihad on churches than sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria—roughly half Christian and half Muslim—where Christians are under severe attack in the Muslim-majority north.¹⁴⁶ Several thousand have died at the hands of the jihadi group “People of Sunnah for Islamic Propagation and Jihad”—better known as Boko Haram, which means, “Western education is forbidden.”¹⁴⁷ Boko Haram’s hatred for Christianity and Christians is such that it seeks to cleanse the Muslim-majority regions of Nigeria of all Christians. In March 2012, a spokesman said, “We are going to put into action new efforts to strike fear into the Christians of the power of Islam by kidnapping their

women.”¹⁴⁸ Other plans for wiping Christians out have included poisoning their food.¹⁴⁹

Boko Haram’s sheer hatred for Christians manifests itself in frequent murderous attacks. In October 2012, as many as thirty Christian university students were slaughtered when Boko Haram gunmen stormed the college and “separated the Christian students from the Muslim students, addressed each victim by name, questioned them, and then proceeded to shoot them or slit their throat.”¹⁵⁰ Before being massacred they were likely asked if they were Muslim, and, if not, if they were willing to convert. That is what happened in September 2011, when Muslim militants “went to shops owned by Christians at a market at about 8 p.m., ordering them to recite verses from the Quran.” If they were unable to do so, the gunmen shot and killed them. Nor does Boko Haram have any compunction for women, children, and the elderly. Many children and pregnant women have been among the thousands of Christians hacked to death, as was a seventy-nine-year-old Christian woman choir member who had her throat slit in her home.¹⁵¹

It is difficult even to keep track of how many churches have been destroyed in Nigeria. Not one Sunday passed in the month of June 2012 without churches being bombed and Christians killed. On June 17, Muslim militants bombed three separate churches, killing dozens of worshippers and critically wounding hundreds, including many children.¹⁵² Reports of growing numbers of Christians who “dare not” attend church services anymore are on the increase, even as other reports suggest that some police are complicit in the attacks, often abandoning their watch in advance of the violence.¹⁵³

In April 2011, Muslims set fire to the Evangelical Winning All Church and some nearby Christian homes, displacing hundreds of local Christians. This “occurred after Muslims approached Christian music shop owner Gabriel Kiwase and told him that his music was disturbing them as they said their prayers. The young Christian man ‘quietly switched off the music set, and then the Muslims left, only to return 20 minutes later to burn down the music shop and then go on a rampage,’” then set fire to the pastor’s house and the property of five other Christians. According to the pastor, whose family was rendered homeless by the

destruction, most members of his church have fled the town, reducing attendance at services to fifty: “We currently worship in the destroyed church building with no roof to shield us from the sun and the rains.”¹⁵⁴

Several more churches were bombed in July 2011, including another Winning All church in an attack that damaged only the building. The day before, during a Sunday service, another church in the same area had been bombed and at least three worshippers killed and many more injured.¹⁵⁵ Later in the month, two more churches were bombed, including a Church of Christ and a Baptist church no longer in use because of previous Muslim attacks.¹⁵⁶ A few days later, when officials arrested Islamist leaders, a Catholic church was torched.¹⁵⁷ On November 4, 2011, Muslims shouting “Allahu Akbar” carried out coordinated attacks on churches and police stations, in one case opening fire on a congregation of “mostly women and children,” killing 150 people.¹⁵⁸

The blame for these attacks does not rest entirely on Boko Haram. Sometimes local Muslims—who may have lived in neighborly peace with Christians in the same village for years—suddenly give violent expression to their anti-Christian sentiments. Weeks before the Christmas Day church bombings of 2011, another jihadi attack, enabled by “local Muslims,” left five churches destroyed and several Christians killed. According to eyewitnesses, “The Muslims in this town were going round town pointing out church buildings and shops owned by Christians to members of Boko Haram, and they in turn bombed these churches and shops.”¹⁵⁹

The situation in Nigeria became even more dramatic at the start of 2012. In January, Boko Haram issued an ultimatum giving Christians three days to evacuate the predominantly Muslim north of Nigeria—or die. Soon thereafter, armed Muslims stormed the Deeper Life Christian Ministry Church and “opened fire on worshippers as their eyes were closed in prayer,” killing six, including the pastor’s wife.¹⁶⁰ On the following day, as friends and relatives gathered to mourn the deaths of those slain, Muslims screaming “Allahu Akbar” appeared and opened fire again—killing another twenty Christians, according to the *Telegraph*.¹⁶¹ Several other churches were bombed in January, and at least seven more Christians were killed at worship.¹⁶²

During a Sunday morning service on February 28, 2012, a Muslim suicide bomber forced his way into the grounds of a Church of Christ, killing two women and an eighteen-month-old child; some fifty people were injured in the blast.¹⁶³ On the previous Sunday, Muslim terrorists had detonated a bomb outside the Christ Embassy Church, injuring five, one critically.¹⁶⁴

On March 11, 2012, another Boko Haram suicide car bomber attacked a Catholic church, killing at least ten people. The bomb detonated as worshippers were attending Sunday Mass at St. Finbar's Catholic Church in Jos, a city where thousands of Christians have died in the last decade as a result of Boko Haram's jihad.¹⁶⁵

The next month, "an attack on a Christian church service in northern Nigeria left at least 16 people dead": armed jihadis on motorcycles stormed Bayero University in the city of Kano on a Sunday morning during a Catholic Mass held in the school's theater hall, throwing explosives and opening fire as people attempted to flee.¹⁶⁶

On August 7, 2012, Muslim gunmen stormed the Deeper Life Bible Church, where Christian worshippers were gathered in prayer, "and surrounded the church in the middle of a worship service and opened fire with AK-47 assault rifles on the worshippers."¹⁶⁷ At least nineteen people, including the pastor, were murdered. The following day, an unexploded bomb was discovered at Revival Church. A World Watch Monitor report of this particular attack describes the typical aftermath of church attacks in Nigeria:

One month after gunmen opened fire inside Deeper Life Bible Church...members of the church have yet to resume worship services and other activities. "All of us are traumatized by this attack. [There is] no family in this church that is not affected by this incident," said Stephen Imagejor, an assistant pastor whose wife, Ruth, was killed, and whose two daughters, Amen, 12, and Juliet, 9, suffered from gunshot wounds and were hospitalized. "In all, 19 died." Church members say they were attacked specifically because of their Christian faith. They may have been a target, they say, because some of the

dead include former Muslims who had converted to Christianity. And in the aftermath, “Many are now saying that they can no longer come to the church,” Imagejor said. “But we will eventually try to see how we can get those of us that have survived the attack to return to the church for worship services. But, I do visit them to encourage them to remain steadfast in the faith in spite of the persecution.”¹⁶⁸

And the jihad only rages on. In September 2012 a suicide bomb attack on St. John’s Catholic Church claimed three lives, including those of a woman and a child; forty-four others were seriously injured.¹⁶⁹ The following month, a renewed spate of church attacks caused thousands more people to flee. An Islamic suicide bomber rammed an SUV loaded with explosives into St. Rita Catholic Church during Sunday Mass, killing eight people and wounding more than a hundred. One reporter “saw the bodies of four worshippers lying on the floor of the church after the blast, surrounded by broken glass. The body of the suicide bomber had been blasted into nearby rubble.” The church building was wrecked and charred black.¹⁷⁰ Also in October, the Church of Brethren was raided by Islamic gunmen, who killed at least two people and set the church aflame.¹⁷¹ Understandably, many Nigerian churches are shutting down in fear of further attacks.

November 25, 2012, was another bloody Sunday for churchgoers in the Muslim-majority north of Nigeria. The Protestant church of St. Andrew near Kaduna was attacked by two consecutive suicide bombings. Shortly after the service, one suicide bomber drove a minibus loaded with explosives into the church. Then, after soldiers and civilians had gathered on the spot, another jihadi detonated a car bomb, leaving a total of eleven dead and some thirty injured. Most of the victims were members of the church choir. Separately, three more Christians were ambushed and killed as they were going to Mass in Kano.¹⁷²

The next month at least four more churches were torched and ten Christians murdered “when the Islamic group members went on rampage and burned 20 houses and a church in the area,” as well as three more

churches, all to cries of “Allahu Akbar!” After the Islamic invaders torched the churches, they used guns and machetes to slaughter their victims.¹⁷³

Spotlight on Kenya

Primarily a Christian country, Kenya is only about 12 percent Muslim. However, it borders Somalia, where the Islamic terror organization al-Shabaab (“the Youth”) has essentially wiped out Christianity and is now targeting the churches of neighboring Kenya, with the aid of Kenya’s own Muslims. Kenya further demonstrates how the line differentiating the Muslim mob from the jihadis can become extremely fuzzy.

During just the four months between April 2012 and August 2012, at least fourteen churches in Kenya were attacked.¹⁷⁴ Then in October a grenade was thrown into the Sunday School building of St. Polycarp Anglican Church. It blew off the roof, killed one boy, and injured eight other children attending Sunday school—some requiring surgery. According to the mother of one of the children, “‘We are in Eastleigh,’ the area of Nairobi well-known for its largely Somali population. . . . ‘Many Christians, including myself, thought that something might happen. Every week we’d wonder ‘What if it’s this Sunday?’ But we’d still go to church.’” Likewise, a parliament member said, “The life of an innocent child has been taken and others have been cruelly injured and traumatized in what should be the safest of places. . . . The sanctity of life has been heartlessly breached in a sanctified place. Such acts seem to be designed to spark civil unrest and intimidate the Christian church. In the face of such an outrage we ask, with the prophet Habakkuk, ‘O Lord, how long?’ and let us trust that God in his mercy will bring justice and relief as we cry out to him.”¹⁷⁵

In November of the previous year, Muslims, apparently angered at the use of wine for communion (Islam forbids alcohol) had thrown a grenade near a church compound—killing two, including an eight-year-old girl, and critically wounding three others. The pastor of another congregation received a message telling him to flee the region “within 48 hours or you [will] see bomb blast taking your life and we know your house, Christians will see war. Don’t take it so lightly. We are for your neck.”¹⁷⁶

In March 2012 a band of Muslims launched a grenade attack on a crowd of 150 Christians attending an outdoor church meeting, killing a woman and a child and wounding about fifty Christians. The Muslim attackers were inspired to action by a preacher holding an alternate rally only 900 feet from the Christian gathering, where the Christians could hear the preacher and the mob slandering Christianity.¹⁷⁷

In April 2012, a Muslim man pretending to be a worshipper at God's House of Miracles International Church threw three grenades during the service, killing a twenty-seven-year-old university student and injuring over a dozen others. The Muslim terrorist, whom eyewitnesses conjectured was a Somali, "looked uncomfortable and always looked down.... He threw three hand grenades and only one exploded. He took off, and he fired in the air three gunshots."¹⁷⁸

In July 2012, several Islamic jihadis launched simultaneous grenade and gunfire attacks on two churches while the congregations were at prayer. "Five militants attacked the Africa Inland Church, killing 17 people and wounding some 60, including many women and children. The other two militants attacked the Catholic church just 3 km away, leaving three believers wounded."¹⁷⁹

In August, Muslims attacked two churches, setting one on fire. Another church was attacked and looted "by an armed mob believed to be sympathizers of the al-Qaeda-linked Somali terrorist network." In the words of the pastor who witnessed the pillage, "attackers armed with guns stormed the compound and immediately began pulling down one iron sheet after another and soon 60 iron sheets were gone.... It was a terrible sight to watch the walls of the church come down, [but] I could not shout for help because the attackers could gun me down.... Shocked and dismayed, the church's 60 congregants arrived for worship the next day to find their church building in ruins."¹⁸⁰ Local police were told that there were threats of an attack and that Muslims were saying things such as "we do not want infidels in this area," but they did nothing.¹⁸¹

Even well-guarded churches are vulnerable to the jihad. In November 2012 an explosion at a church housed inside a police compound in Garissa killed a police officer, who also served as church pastor, and injured at least two dozen others.¹⁸²

Spotlight on Sudan

Ever since South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan in June 2011—after suffering decades of genocide by the Islamist government in Khartoum, which had declared a jihad on the Christians and other non-Muslims of the south—the Khartoum government has made it even more unbearable for the Christians who remain under its authority in Sudan proper, especially those in the Nuba Mountains. Sudan represents the case of government-supported jihad, an Islamist state waging a war on Christian churches within its own borders. In fact in 1992 the Islamist government of Khartoum declared a formal jihad on all those in the South and the Nuba who rejected Sharia law. This declaration was justified by a fatwa issued by Sudan's Islamic authorities, decreeing, "An insurgent who was previously a Muslim is now an apostate; and a non-Muslim is a non-believer standing as a bulwark against the spread of Islam, and Islam has granted the freedom of killing both of them."¹⁸³

In late 2011 President Bashir confirmed plans to adopt an entirely Islamic constitution to "strengthen Sharia law." Soon thereafter, "emboldened" Muslims began attacking Christians trying to construct a church, "claiming that Christianity was no longer an accepted religion in the country,"¹⁸⁴ and authorities began threatening to demolish church buildings "as part of a long-standing bid to rid Sudan of Christianity," according to World Watch Monitor.¹⁸⁵ Around the same time, at least ten church leaders in Khartoum received text messages saying things such as, "We want this country to be purely an Islamic state, so we must kill the infidels and destroy their churches all over Sudan."¹⁸⁶

In April 2012, a Christian compound in Khartoum was stormed "by a throng of Muslim extremists armed with clubs, iron rods, a bulldozer and fire." The day before, a Muslim leader had called on Muslims to destroy "the infidels' church." Shouting "Allahu Akbar!" and "No more Christianity from today on—no more church from today on," the Muslims also stormed the Bible school bookstore, burning Bibles and threatening to kill anyone resisting them. "What happened could not be imagined—it was terrible," said an eyewitness. "They burned all furniture of the school and the church as well." As usual, "Police at the compound stood back and did nothing to prevent the mob from vandalizing the compound."¹⁸⁷

In March 2012, Sudanese aerial strikes were aimed at church buildings in various regions, especially the Nuba. Churches began to hold worship services very early in the morning and late in the evening to avoid the aerial bombardments intentionally targeting them. The Khartoum regime is “‘doing everything possible to make sure they get rid of Christianity from the Nuba Mountains—churches and church schools are the targets of both the Sudanese Armed Forces and its militias,’” said an aid worker.¹⁸⁸ Likewise, in May 2012, without any reason, security officials closed down the regional offices of the Sudan Council of Churches and a much-needed church clinic for the poor. Staff members were arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. “Their families are living in agony due to the uncertainty of their fate.”¹⁸⁹

In June 2012, authorities bulldozed a Catholic and an Episcopalian church building to the ground and confiscated three Catholic schools, claiming that they are now unwelcome in Sudan in light of South Sudan’s independence. “‘The government wants to remove all churches from Khartoum,’ the source said ‘Tell churches, all churches, to stand on prayer for the church in Sudan.’” Another church building in the same area, in the possession of the Full Gospel Church, had been destroyed two months earlier.¹⁹⁰

The West

Muslim attacks on churches are not limited to the Muslim world. They are occurring increasingly wherever Muslims have a large presence, particularly in Europe. France, the Western European country with the largest Muslim population, is also the Western nation to have witnessed the most attacks on Christian churches, religious symbols, and even cemeteries. For example, in early December 2012, the chapel in the military naval base of Toulon was desecrated. In the chapel, access to which is highly controlled, “three major symbols of the Catholic faith were overturned and destroyed: the tabernacle, the baptistry, and the ambo (the pulpit where the Bible, which was also trampled on, rests).”¹⁹¹

Three months earlier a church in the town of Chassieu was vandalized with graffiti reading, “Islam is growing in power.” Although graffiti attacks on mosques attract wide attention from the national media and politicians, who vociferously condemn such intolerance, attacks on

churches are hushed up—even as the overwhelming majority of places of worship desecrated in France are churches.¹⁹²

In other attacks, Muslims in France have thrown stones at Christians and disrupted church services:

- In October 2011, stone-throwing Muslims attacked Christians during a Catholic festival, but the media largely ignored it.¹⁹³
- In May 2012, prior to the celebration of Mass, “four youths, aged fourteen to eighteen, broke into the Church of St. Joseph in Carcassone, before launching handfuls of pebbles at 150 faithful present at the service.” Though they were chased out, “the parishioners, many of whom are elderly, were greatly shocked by the disrespectful act of the youths of North African origin.”¹⁹⁴
- In September 2012, young Muslims threw stones and chestnuts at the patio and windows of the church Élisabeth de la Trinité in the city of Dijon. Mass was interrupted twice. There are fears that the church may face desecration or worse damage in the future, due to the high Muslim population in the area.¹⁹⁵

Nor is France the only European nation suffering such attacks. In Macedonia, for instance, a two-century-old Christian church famed for its valuable icons was set on fire in response to “a carnival in which Orthodox Christian men dressed as women in burkas and mocked the Koran.” Earlier, “perpetrators attacked a church in the nearby village of Labunista, destroying a cross standing outside” and “also defaced a Macedonian flag outside Struga’s municipal building, replacing it with a green flag representing Islam.”¹⁹⁶ In September 2012 in Catalonia, Spain, to give an example from the other end of Europe, a Catholic church was attacked by Moroccan Muslims who were detained and charged with multiple assaults and robberies, including terrorizing and beating indigenous Spaniards with clubs and robbing them.¹⁹⁷

The attacks on Christian churches have even reached North America. In Canada in late October 2012, a Molotov cocktail was hurled through the window of a Coptic church near Toronto—just as happens regularly in Egypt. Unlike in Egypt, however, firefighters came quickly. “Police,” it was reported, “have no suspects or motive in the incident.”¹⁹⁸ Needless to say, Copts have been familiar with the suspects and motives of this kind of attack for centuries. As Egypt’s Christians flee their indigenous homeland seeking to worship in peace, the jihad on churches follows.

MONASTERIES AND MUSLIM MARAUDERS

Islamic law treats monasteries like churches—undesirable institutions that may at best be allowed to exist, but never built anew or repaired. *The Conditions of Omar* stipulates that Christians are “Not to build a church in our city—nor a monastery, convent, or monk’s cell in the surrounding areas—and not to repair those that fall in ruins or are in Muslim quarters,” and “Not to harbor in them [churches and monasteries] or our [Christians’] homes a spy, nor conceal any deceits from Muslims.”

Accordingly, from the beginnings of the Islamic conquests, monasteries have been prey to the depredations of Muslim marauders, mostly Bedouins and other Muslim nomads, because of the remote locations of most monasteries. While they are interested in plundering the monasteries of whatever meager wealth they may contain, such raiders almost always justify their violence in Islamic terms, exhibiting hatred and contempt for Christianity.

Just like attacks on churches, attacks on monasteries are as old as Islam’s initial invasions of Christian countries in the seventh century, when “monasteries became the object of endlessly repeated plundering that caused them to resemble remote strongholds, entrenched behind high walls.”¹⁹⁹ Writing in the tenth century, the Coptic chronicler Severus ibn al-Muqaffa records that “the Arabs in the land of Egypt had ruined the country. . . . They burnt the fortresses and pillaged the provinces, and killed a multitude of the saintly monks who were in them [monasteries]

and they violated a multitude of the virgin nuns and killed some of them with the sword.”²⁰⁰

Well over a thousand years after those words were written, little seems to have changed in Egypt.²⁰¹ Consider the Abu Fana monastery raid. Abu Fana, also known as the Monastery of the Cross because its church was once decorated with many crosses, is situated in the western desert of Egypt, less than two hundred miles from Cairo. Its original foundation is ancient, and though it was laid to waste over the centuries by nomadic attacks, it was again occupied by Coptic monks in 1999.

But on May 31, 2008, sixty to seventy Muslim Bedouins armed with machine guns raided the monastery. In the process they destroyed altars, broke crosses, and burned Bibles, all while cursing Christians and Christianity. When a monk reached for the cross as they were ransacking the monastery, one of the assailants mocked, “Ha! Let’s see if the cross will save you!” Three monks were kidnapped for ransom.

According to court testimony, the kidnapped monks were tortured over the course of twelve hours:

One of the monks had his arm and legs broken. The other two were tied together with ropes, suspended from a tree, and severely beaten with hoses and sticks. Afterwards, they were placed—upside down and still tied together—on the back of a donkey and shoved off. The monks were further commanded to spit on the cross and proclaim the *shehada* [the profession of Muslim faith that “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet,” which, when uttered in the presence of Muslims, converts the speaker into a Muslim]—beaten every time they refused, and even threatened with death.

A video disseminated soon after the attack showed numerous monks bruised, burnt, and bloodied, with broken bones and puncture wounds. One monk had been severely beaten on the head, another stabbed in the neck. A broadcaster called parts of the video “too disturbing” to air. When the Coptic pope visited one of the critically wounded monks in

the Mina hospital, the monk told him: “Sir, the situation is constantly getting worse.” In fact, although it has only been reoccupied by Christian monks since 1999, this was the seventeenth time this particular monastery was attacked.

As is typical, Egyptian police took a full three hours to arrive—even though the police station is less than two miles from the monastery and was contacted immediately once the raid commenced. Despite the egregious anti-Christian hostility evident in the assault, Egyptian State TV blamed it on a “land dispute.”²⁰²

If the Abu Fana Monastery attack was initiated by lawless Bedouins, the Egyptian military itself was responsible for two more monastery attacks—ironically prompted by the fact that the monasteries had built walls to protect themselves from such Bedouin raids, in light of the chaos that prevailed in late January 2011 during the mass protests to oust Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

When the Anba Bishoy Monastery, seventy miles north of Cairo, tried to create fortifications soon after the revolts began, the Egyptian military stormed the fifth-century monastery with five tanks, armored vehicles, and a bulldozer to demolish the fence. Live ammunition was fired, wounding two monks and six monastery workers. Monks were arrested. According to Father Hemanot Ava Bishoy, “The army was shocked to see the monks standing there praying ‘Lord have mercy’ without running away. This is what really upset them,” he said. “As the soldiers were demolishing the gate and the fence they were chanting ‘Allahu Akbar’ and ‘Victory, Victory.’”²⁰³

The army also attacked the Monastery of St. Makarios of Alexandria in Wady al-Rayan, Fayoum, some sixty miles from Cairo, for the same reason: the monks had dared to erect a fence to protect the monastery—in light of the lawlessness of late January 2011, and because the monastery had already been attacked by armed marauders who injured six monks, hospitalizing one in critical condition. The military stormed the monastery, firing live ammunition at the monks, and beat them with batons. It proceeded to demolish the newly erected fence and one room of the actual monastery.²⁰⁴

Just as Muslim leaders incite violence against churches, they also incite violence against monasteries. For example, in September 2010, Dr. Muhammad Salim al-Awwa, a leading Islamic figure who ran in Egypt's presidential elections, appeared on Al Jazeera and, in a wild tirade, accused the Copts of "stocking arms and ammunitions in their churches and monasteries"—imported from Israel, no less, since "Israel is in the heart of the Coptic Cause"—and "preparing to wage war against Muslims." He warned that if nothing is done, the "country will burn," inciting Muslims to "counteract the strength of the [Coptic] Church." Awwa further charged that Egypt's security forces cannot enter the monasteries to investigate for weapons—an amazing assertion, considering the above military attacks on Egypt's monasteries.²⁰⁵

While Awwa's accusations that Egypt's downtrodden Christian minorities are out to conquer the nation are baseless and absurd, they naturally resonate with Muslims who are, after all, constantly arming and stockpiling weapons, including in mosques.²⁰⁶ Indeed, in May 2012, during a clash between Egypt's Islamist parties and the military, jihadis sheltering in the Nour Mosque opened fire on the military from the windows of the minaret. (When the military stormed the mosque, apprehending the snipers, all the Muslim Brotherhood had to say was, "We also condemn the aggression [from the military] against the house of God [Nour Mosque] and the arrest of people from within"—without bothering to denounce the terror such people were committing from within "the house of God.")²⁰⁷

But there is another reason that Awwa's paranoid charges that Coptic churches and monasteries are harboring weapons resonates with the Muslim mindset—a suspicion of churches and monasteries that can, again, be traced back centuries to *The Conditions of Omar*, which command Christians "not to harbor in them [churches or monasteries] or our homes a spy, nor conceal any deceits from Muslims."

Now that the "Arab Spring" has reached Syria—another stronghold of early Christianity that today is almost entirely Islamic—the attacks on monasteries there demonstrate the continuity between the original jihad and the jihad we know in the twenty-first century. Monasteries were prey to raids by Muslim raiders motivated by greed and plunder in

the early centuries of Islam, and they are treated the same way now by Islamic jihadis seeking to enrich and empower themselves.

In February 2012, in a repeat of early Islamic history, some thirty armed and masked jihadis attacked the fourth-century Catholic monastery of Mar Musa demanding money. This kind of attack was unprecedented in Syria's modern history. "According to the Catholic Archbishop of Damascus, maronite Samir Nassar, the situation in the country is spiraling out of control as the armed opposition spreads its influence to different regions of the state."²⁰⁸ The monastery was attacked twice again, in April and August. In the latter attack, "'gunmen stole everything they could steal,' including tractors and other agricultural and farming tools."²⁰⁹

Not all anti-monastery activities under Islam are replete with fire and destruction. There are also more subtle attacks. Consider the plight of Turkey's fifth-century Mor Gabriel Monastery near the Syrian border, inhabited today by only a few dozen Christians dedicated to learning the ancient Aramaic language spoken by Jesus. Its existence is at risk after a July 2012 ruling by Turkey's highest appeals court. Neighboring Muslims, with the support of an MP from the Islamic Justice and Development Party, filed a lawsuit accusing the Christians of practicing "'anti-Turkish activities' [code for anti-Islamic activities]...and of illegally occupying land which belongs to the neighboring villages." The highest appeals court in Ankara ruled in favor of the Muslim villagers, saying the land that has been part of the monastery for sixteen hundred years is not its property, even declaring that the monastery was built over the ruins of a mosque—though in fact Muhammad and Islam were born 170 years after the monastery was built.²¹⁰

ISLAM'S WAR ON THE CROSS

Christians do not congregate—and die—around crosses as they often do in churches, where they are attacked and slaughtered like sitting ducks. Attacks on the cross, while frequent, are therefore less bloody and dramatic.

Still the Christian cross is the quintessential symbol of Christianity—for all denominations, even including most forms of otherwise iconoclastic Protestantism. Accordingly it is no surprise that, from the beginning, the Cross has been a despised symbol in Islam, regularly cursed and attacked.

Many reasons account for Muslim hatred of the cross. Islam generally forbids anything deemed “idolatrous,” any object of worship besides Allah. Thus pictures and images are banned in Islam. (And thus Egypt’s great pyramids and other pharaonic antiquities are again under threat, just as they were in former times, soon after the Islamic invasion, when any number of Muslim leaders tried to destroy and deface them. The only difference, as Abd al-Latif al-Mahmoud, Bahrain’s “Sheikh of Sunni Sheikhs” put it in July 2012 while congratulating the Muslim Brotherhood’s Egyptian presidency victory, is that thanks to modern technology, Egypt’s Islamists can now “‘destroy the Pyramids and accomplish what Amr bin al-As [Egypt’s original Muslim conqueror] could not.’”)²¹¹

Not only does Islam deem the Christian cross an idol, but the cross also symbolizes the fundamental disagreement between Christians and Muslims. Islam utterly rejects the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which are fundamental to Christianity. While Muslims accept Jesus as a prophet born of a virgin who will return at the end times, they vehemently reject the idea that he is the Son of God, crucified and resurrected from the dead. As historian Sidney Griffith put it, “The cross and the icons publicly declared those very points of Christian faith which the Koran, in the Muslim view, explicitly denied: that Christ was the Son of God and that he died on the cross.” Thus “the Christian practice of venerating the cross and the icons of Christ and the saints often aroused the disdain of Muslims.” Accordingly, there was an ongoing “campaign to erase the public symbols of Christianity, especially the previously ubiquitous sign of the cross.”²¹²

Islam’s hostility to the cross, like all of Islam’s hostilities, begins with the Muslim prophet Muhammad. His abhorrence of the cross was such that his earliest biographers reported he would always destroy any object that resembled a cross. In William Muir’s words, Muhammad “had such

a repugnance to the form of the cross that he broke everything brought into his house with its figure upon it.”²¹³ Moreover, the Prophet claimed that at the end times Jesus himself would make it a point to “break the cross.”²¹⁴

Islamic history ever since Muhammad is riddled with anecdotes of Muslims cursing and breaking crosses—beginning with the earliest phases of the Islamic conquest. Prior to the Battle of Yarmuk in 636, which pitted the earliest invading Muslim armies against the Christian Byzantine Empire, Khalid bin al-Walid, the “Sword of Allah”—a particularly ferocious warrior still venerated among militant Muslims today—told the Christian army that if they wanted peace they would have to “break the cross” and embrace Islam, or pay *jizya* and live in subjugation.²¹⁵ The Byzantines opted for war.

Conquered Christians had no choice. *The History of the Patriarchate of the Egyptian Church* offers numerous accounts throughout the ages of Muslim authorities destroying the crosses of the Coptic Church—including the supposedly magnanimous Saladin, who ordered “the removal of every cross from atop the dome of every church in the provinces of Egypt.”²¹⁶

In fact early accounts of conflict between Muslims and Christians frequently focus on the cross and other religious symbols. Prior to the Battle of Yarmuk, for instance, another Muslim captain, Ubaida, sent a message to Caliph Omar lamenting that “the Dog of the Romans [Byzantine emperor Heraclius] has frustrated us with the ubiquitous presence of the cross.” His complaint is unsurprising given that, as one historian explains with reference to the Battle of Yarmuk, “Almost more important than tactics was the question of morale, and Byzantine leaders paid close attention to this. Byzantium’s role as the Christian Empire was central to its morale. Careful religious preparations preceded a battle,” including the parading of relics, images, and, of course, crosses.²¹⁷

But Muslims cursing the cross (not to mention calling Christians dogs) is certainly not limited to history. In March 2012, a video of a Muslim mob attacking a commonwealth cemetery near Benghazi, Libya, where British officers who died during World War II were buried, appeared on the Internet. As the Muslims kick down and destroy headstones with

crosses on them, the man videotaping them urges them to “Break the cross of the dogs!” while he and others cry “Allahu Akbar!” At one point, he chuckles as he tells one overly zealous desecrater to “calm down.” When another Muslim complains that he is unable to kick down a particular stone, wondering if it is because “this soldier must have been good to his parents,” the man videotaping replies, “Come on, they are all dogs, who cares?” Finally the mob congregates around the huge Cross of Sacrifice, the cemetery’s cenotaph monument, and starts hammering at it, to more cries of “Allahu Akbar.”²¹⁸

The persistence of Muslim hostility to the cross, from the birth of Islam to the present, speaks for itself. In August 2012 in Egypt, leaflets were distributed in areas with large Christian populations offering monetary rewards to Muslims who “kill or physically attack the enemies of the religion of Allah—the Christians in all of Egypt’s provinces, the Slaves of the Cross, Allah’s curse upon them.”²¹⁹ One month later, when the U.S. Embassy in Cairo was under attack, “Slaves of the Cross” was one of the epithets hurled by rioting Muslims.

Hostility to the cross frequently leads Muslims beyond the disparagement of “Christian dogs” and “Slaves of the Cross.” In Egypt, the Muslims who raided the Abu Fana monastery destroyed crosses and tried to force their monk victims to renounce and spit on the cross, while the Muslims who destroyed the St. George Church claimed the cross was “irritating Muslims and their children.”²²⁰ In Algeria, the Muslims who raided the Protestant Church of Ouargla made it a point to damage and dismantle the iron cross on the church’s roof. In Macedonia, rioting Muslims destroyed the cross of a church in the village of Labunista. And in May 2012 in Tunisia, as we have seen, Salafi Muslims “covered the cross of the Orthodox Church of Tunis with garbage bags, telling church members that they do not wish to see the vision of the Cross anywhere in the Islamic state of Tunisia.”²²¹

After the Russian ambassador in Tunis requested that the nation’s Ministry of Interior “protect the church,” both the Russian school located behind the church and the Christian cemetery in Tunis were vandalized. The walls of the school and religious frescoes were smeared with fecal matter, while the cemetery’s crosses were destroyed.²²²

Attacks on Christian cemeteries and their crosses are on the rise. The historical graveyard of English Christians in Bushehr, Iran, which was also used by the Armenian community, is in complete disarray and “all the crosses on graves are broken.”²²³ In Islamist-dominant Iran, one may presume that the animus behind the desecration of this Christian cemetery and its crosses is the same hatred that can be seen on the videotape from the Benghazi cemetery.²²⁴ All the way at the other end of the Islamic world, in Muslim-majority Senegal in October 2012, more than 160 graves were desecrated in two Catholic cemeteries: “Crucifixes and other stone objects were taken away from their graves in the Christian cemeteries of Saint Lazarus of Bethany and Bel Air, by individuals who have not yet been identified.”²²⁵

Nor is it just graves that are attacked when Muslims take offense at the cross. In Egypt in October 2011 seventeen-year-old Ayman Nabil Labib, a Christian student, was strangled and beaten to death by his Muslim teacher and some fellow students—simply for refusing to obey the teacher’s orders to remove his cross. Student eyewitnesses present during the assault said that while Ayman was in the classroom he was told to cover up his tattooed wrist cross, which many Copts wear. Not only did he refuse, but he defiantly produced the pectoral cross he wore under his shirt, which prompted the enraged Muslim teacher and some students to attack and severely beat the Christian youth. According to his father, who spoke to eyewitnesses, “They beat my son so much in the classroom that he fled to the lavatory on the ground floor, but they followed him and continued their assault. When one of the supervisors took him to his room, Ayman was still breathing. The ambulance transported him from there dead, one hour later.”

The headmaster, informed of the attack in progress, reportedly ignored it and “continued to sip his tea.” As usual, Egyptian state media tried to minimize the attack, insisting the “conflict” was “non-sectarian” and that it revolved around non-religious matters. When the truth was later revealed, one prominent columnist wrote in the independent newspaper *Masry Youm*, “I was shaken to the bones when I read the news that a teacher forced a student to take off the crucifix he wore, and when the Christian student stood firm for his rights, the teacher quarreled with

him, joined by some of the students; he was beastly assaulted until his last breath left him.” After the funeral service for Ayman, over five thousand Christians marched, denouncing “the repeated killing of Copts in Egypt” and referring to Ayman as a “Martyr of the Cross,” an honorific that litters the annals of Christian history under Islam.²²⁶

Such stories of Christian children being abused for wearing the cross are not uncommon in the Muslim world. A 12-year-old Turkish boy who converted to Christianity and decided to profess his new faith by wearing a silver cross necklace in class was attacked by Muslim classmates and teachers, who spit on him and beat him regularly.²²⁷

In Egypt in July 2010, the case of Nagla Imam, an apostate to Christianity who was being persecuted by both family and nation, was covered by satellite media stations. After her arrest, a top government official “twisted the cross she was wearing, tightening the chain around her neck, while saying ‘the cross will be the death of you.’ He then proceeded to beat her, leaving her with a black eye, a bruised body, and broken teeth. Before releasing her, he said, ‘Stay in your house, till you are carried out to your grave,’ adding that if she does not return to Islam, ‘people’ would be dispatched to ‘take care of her.’”²²⁸

The cross often exposes its bearer’s Christian identity, bringing on abuse and even murder. In January 2011, an off-duty Muslim police officer on a train from Asyut to Cairo shouted “Allahu Akbar!” and opened fire on six Christians, killing a seventy-one-year-old man and critically wounding the rest. The newspaper *Masry Youm* reported that the assailant had checked for passengers with the traditional Coptic cross tattooed on their wrists.²²⁹ (Interestingly, Copts traditionally wore these tattooed crosses at least in part so that they could be identified as Christians in case they were abducted and forced to convert to Islam. Several accounts exist of Muslims scraping these tattooed crosses from the wrists of their victims.)²³⁰

In July 2012, Julie Aftab, a Pakistani Christian woman now living in the U.S., revealed how, ten years earlier, when she was sixteen and living in Pakistan, Muslims disfigured her in an acid attack after one man noticed the “small cross she wore around her neck,” which exposed her as a Christian. From the account in the *Daily Mail*:

The man became abusive, shouting at her that she was living in the gutter and would go to hell for shunning Islam. He left and returned half an hour later, clutching a bottle of battery acid which he savagely chucked over her head. As she ran screaming for the door a second man grabbed her by the hair and forced more of the liquid down her throat, searing her esophagus. Teeth fell from her mouth as she desperately called for help, stumbling down the street. A woman heard her cries and took her to her home, pouring water over her head and taking her to hospital. At first the doctors refused to treat her, because she was a Christian. ‘They all turned against me ... even the people who took me to the hospital. They told the doctor they were going to set the hospital on fire if they treated me’.... 67 percent of her esophagus was burned and she was missing an eye and both eyelids. What remained of her teeth could be seen through a gaping hole where her cheek had been. The doctors predicted she would die any day. Despite the odds she pulled through.²³¹

In the Maldives in October 2010, authorities rescued Geethamma George, a Christian teacher from India, when Muslim “parents threatened to tie and drag her off of the island” for “preaching Christianity.” Her crime was simply to draw a compass in class as part of a geography lesson; the compass was mistaken for a Christian cross.²³²

In Saudi Arabia in 2010, there was “public outrage” when a Romanian soccer player kissed the tattoo of a cross he had on his arm after scoring a goal. In October of the next year, a Colombian soccer-player “was arrested by the Saudi moral police after customers in a Riyadh shopping mall expressed outrage over the sports player’s religious tattoos, which included the face of Jesus of Nazareth on his arm.”²³³

In Indonesia in February 2012, the Islamist Prosperous Justice Party complained about the Indonesian Red Cross symbol because of its identification with “Christian culture and traditions.”²³⁴

Islamic hostility for the Christian cross has even reached the West. In January 2011, in a Muslim-majority area of Odense, Denmark, an Iranian

Christian family had two cars vandalized—windows smashed, seats cut up, and vehicles set ablaze—because the cars had crosses hanging in them, which local “youths” (the press’s usual disingenuous term for Muslim vandals and rioters) had demanded be removed from view. The family has since relocated to an undisclosed location.²³⁵

In Spain in April 2012, the nation’s top-ranked football team, Real Madrid, removed a Christian cross from its official logo in accordance with the conditions of Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr al Qasimi, a business partner, and “to strengthen its fan base among Muslims in Europe and the Middle East.” According to Spain’s top sports newspaper, *Marca*, the change was made to “avoid any form of confusion or misinterpretation in a region where the majority of the population is Muslim.”²³⁶

In Switzerland in October 2012, Muslims complained about a billboard campaign for Swiss International Air Lines, whose logo includes the cross from the Swiss flag, because the ads contained the words “the cross is trumps”: “Muslims in Switzerland have responded negatively to the advertising, which they believe promotes Christianity over other religions. . . . ‘Many Muslims feel this Christian slogan [of Swiss International] is a provocation and an assault against Islam.’” The airline said that its ad campaign does not carry any religious or political message—that in fact the word “trumps” is a pun for a Swiss card game—and apologized for upsetting Muslims.²³⁷

Even in the United States, in October 2011, Fox News reported that “the Washington, D.C. Office of Human Rights confirmed that it is investigating allegations that Catholic University of America violated the human rights of Muslim students by not providing them rooms without Christian symbols for their daily prayers. The investigation alleges that Muslim students ‘must perform their prayers surrounded by symbols of Catholicism—e.g., a wooden crucifix, paintings of Jesus, pictures of priests and theologians which many Muslim students find inappropriate.’” Behind the complaint is John F. Banzhaf III, a George Washington University professor who asserts that Muslim students are “particularly offended” because they have to “meditate” at the school’s chapels and cathedral, where they pray while “having to stare up and be looked down upon by a cross of Jesus.”²³⁸

He does not bother mentioning that offended Muslim students need not attend a private Catholic university.

The examples above are mostly taken from just the past two years. Mark Durie of the Middle Eastern Forum has collected more anecdotes of Muslim hostility toward and violence against the cross from around the world over the past several years:

- **Afghanistan:** A poster was found containing the caption “Destroying the cross is an Islamic obligation” and instructing Muslims to destroy objects with crosses on them.
- **Albania:** In March 2004, a Muslim mob attacked and desecrated the church of St. Andrew in Podujevo, Kosovo. Photographs show Muslims on the roof breaking off the prominent metal crosses attached there. There have also been many instances of Muslim mobs smashing crosses in Christian graveyards across Kosovo.
- **England:** In November 2004, Belmarsh Prison was reported to have plans to spend £1.6 million (equivalent to \$2.4 million) on a mosque. The facility already maintained a multi-denominational chapel, but it was rejected for use by the Muslim inmates—some of whom had been convicted on terrorism charges—because the chapel contained crosses, which had to be covered up when the Muslims say their prayers.
- **Iraq:** In April 2007, in the al-Doura Christian area of Baghdad, Muslim militants instructed Christians to remove visible crosses from atop their churches, and issued a fatwa forbidding Christians from wearing crosses.
- **Malaysia:** In October 2007, a parliamentarian complained about the “display of religious symbols” in front of church schools, insisting that “these crosses need to be destroyed.”
- **Pakistan:** Two days before Christmas in 1998, a Catholic church in Faisalabad had its crucifix pulled down by a Muslim leader.

- **Palestinian Authority:** When Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, some of its militias went on a cross-destroying rampage. The Rosary Sisters' convent and school in Gaza were ransacked and looted by masked men, and crosses were specifically targeted for destruction. A Christian resident of Gaza also reported having a crucifix ripped from his neck by someone from the Hamas Executive Force, who said, "That is forbidden."²³⁹
- **Saudi Arabia:** In 1995 George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was compelled to remove his pectoral cross when he was forced to make an intermediary stop in the land that birthed Islam. On the approach to the Red Sea coastal city of Jidda, Carey was told to remove all religious insignia, including his clerical collar and pectoral cross.

The long record of Muslim violence specifically targeting churches, monasteries, and crosses is conclusive evidence of Muslim hostility toward the Christian religion itself. This centuries-old, continents-wide pattern of violence cannot be explained by the race, culture, or particular circumstances of the perpetrators, any more than by that of their victims. Muslims who attack churches and other expressions of Christianity come from widely different places all around the world. The attackers are of different races—"white," "yellow," "brown," and "black." They speak different languages. They have lived at widely different times in world history. The common factor in all these attacks on Christian worship—the real reason behind them—can only be Islam itself.



PART THREE

ISLAM'S WAR ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

The precarious status of churches and other forms of Christian expression under Sharia law is emblematic of Islam's innate hostility to Christianity. But Islamic law goes further, denying freedom of speech to all Christians and even freedom of conscience and conviction to Christian converts. Sharia curtails these freedoms by means of three laws that, though separate, often overlap: the laws against apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism. For example, the Muslim who converts to Christianity is guilty of apostasy. But he can also be seen as a blasphemer, whose very existence is an affront to Islam. And when he speaks about Christianity—as enthusiastic new converts are wont to do—around Muslims, he exposes himself to charges of proselytism. These three Islamic laws effectively ban freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and even freedom of thought.

None of these three laws applies solely to Christianity. Muslims can apostatize to any or no religion; people from any non-Muslim religion

can theoretically proselytize Muslims; and non-Christians, including Muslims, can be charged with blasphemy. For a number of reasons, however, Christians are by far the most likely to fall afoul of Islam's anti-freedom laws.

First we will examine the doctrinal background of these three laws. Then we will consider how and why it is that Christians are most likely to break them. And finally we will look at how the Islamic doctrines enshrined in these laws have played out in practice—by examining some historical patterns and then looking at current applications of the laws. Once again we will see remarkable continuity—from one end of the Islamic world to the other, and from the earliest beginnings of Muslim history to today—in how these laws are understood and enforced.

APOSTASY

Irtidad, or apostasy from Islam, is one of the most reprehensible crimes—if not *the* most reprehensible crime—in Islamic law, deserving of great punishment, including execution. So great a crime is it that if several people apostatize at once, the Muslim state is obligated to proclaim an official jihad against them.¹ Moreover, because he has actively left or “betrayed” Islam, the apostate is seen as worse than the born infidel. The absolute condemnation of apostasy in Islam is so well known that it is almost redundant quoting sources. Nevertheless, some striking passages from Islamic authorities follow.

According to the entry on the apostate (or *murtadd*) in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, long considered to be the standard reference work in the field of Islamic studies, “In Fikh [or *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence], there is unanimity that the male apostate must be put to death, but only if he is grown up.... A woman, on the other hand, is imprisoned, according to Hanafi and Shi'i teaching, until she again adopts Islam.” According to other schools of law, “she also is put to death.... Execution should be by sword ... apostates must sometimes have been tortured to death.” As for those apostates who manage to escape death, they “are not sure of their

lives, as their Muslim relatives endeavor secretly to dispose of them by poison or otherwise.”

The late Majid Khadduri, “internationally recognized as one of the world’s leading authorities on Islamic law and jurisprudence,” wrote in his *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*,² “Both jurists and theologians agree that apostasy constitutes a violation of the law punishable both in this world and the next. Not only is the person denied salvation in the next world, but he is also liable to capital punishment by the state.” Khadduri quotes the various Koranic verses—2:214, 5:59, 16:108—that condemn apostates and then focuses on 4:90-91, which calls for the killing of the apostate from Islam, and concludes,

Although only [verse 4:90–91] specifically states that death sentence should be imposed on those who apostatize or turn back from religion, *all the commentators agree that a believer who turns back from his religion (irtadda) openly or secretly, must be killed if he persists in disbelief.* The traditions are more explicit in providing the death penalty for everyone who apostatizes from Islam. *The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: “He who changes his religion [Islam] must be killed.”* Cases of those who apostatized and escaped punishment are few, but the rule was certainly more strictly enforced after Muhammad’s death as a result of the victories won during the wars of the ridda (secession). The law of apostasy endorsed by the practice of the early caliphs has been sanctioned by *ijma* [that is, consensus among Islam’s scholars], and there is no disagreement as to its validity.

The *murtadd* [apostate], however, is not to be executed at once; he is warned and given three days of grace to afford him time to choose between Islam and death. Except the Hanafi and Hanbali jurists, the authorities treat women on the same footing as men. Abu Hanifa maintained that women should be forced to return to Islam by such punishment as beating

and imprisonment. Children and the insane are not liable to be killed until the latter recover and the former come of age. The killing of the *murtadd* must be done by the sword.... [Emphasis added.]

What is amazing is that not only are apostates still being attacked and killed around the Islamic world, but the smallest details of their persecution are consistent across the whole history of Islam, from its beginnings to today. For instance, note the Sunni traditions, explained above, that maintain female apostates should not be executed but rather “forced to return to Islam by such punishment as beating and imprisonment.” The Shia position is similar: “The woman guilty of apostasy is not punished with death, even if she was born in the Muslim faith, but she is condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and is to be beaten with rods at the hours of prayer....” None of this is mere theory. In the 1800s, a Muslim in India confessed to what he did to his sister who had converted to Christianity: “I began persecution. I starved her; I locked her up for days together. Look at her now—her weakness and her loss of flesh are due to my treatment of her. But nothing shook her determination to be a Christian.”³ And this identical pattern of abuse is still ongoing today. For example, as recently as December 2012 in Kyrgyz—a nation seldom associated with “radical Islam”—after a young Muslim girl converted to Christianity, her parents beat her “until she fell unconscious.” Next, because she still refused to renounce Christ, her parents trapped her in a cold room for days and later scorched her face on the stove.⁴

In August 2011, in distant Uganda, a Muslim father imprisoned and starved his fourteen-year-old daughter, Susan Ithungu, because she converted to Christianity. According to Susan’s younger brother, their father had earlier warned them “not to attend church or listen to the gospel message. He even threatened us with a sharp knife that he was ready to kill us in broad daylight in case we converted to Christianity.”

When Susan refused to recant, her father “locked her up in a room of the semi-permanent house for six months without seeing sunlight.... The younger brother was warned not to tell anyone that Susan

was locked up in a room and was not given any food.” Susan’s brother smuggled scraps of food to his sister, though “most days she could only feed on mud.” He also dug a hole under the door, pouring water through it, which she had to lap up with her tongue. When she was finally rescued, she “was bony, very weak, and not able to talk or walk. . . . Her hair had turned yellow, she had long fingernails and sunken eyes, and she looked very slim, less than 20 kilograms [44 pounds],” requiring over a year of hospitalization.⁵ Susan has “forgiven her father,” and is thankful to all the strangers who have supported her. Meanwhile, she says, “none of my family members has come to see me. . . . My own people have abandoned me” for converting to Christianity.⁶

These examples of Muslim family members torturing female converts to Christianity come from three widely separated countries—India, Kyrgyz, and Uganda—that have little in common: neither language, nor race, nor ethnicity, nor culture. What, then, binds them together, explaining these identical patterns of abuse? What is the one thing they do have in common? Honesty requires that we give one answer: *Islam*.

There are many more examples of how even the subtlest aspects of Sharia law against apostasy are still in full force today. Recall how in Islamic law mentally retarded apostates are not to be executed. Accordingly, when it is expedient for an Islamic state to release an apostate from prison, the authorities usually portray the apostate as “retarded,” sometimes justifying this claim by arguing that the act of leaving Islam for Christianity is itself proof that the renegade is retarded. This was the case in Afghanistan, where in 2006 one Abdul Rahman was exposed as an apostate to Christianity and subsequently arrested, incarcerated, and sentenced to death. Because his story received widespread media attention and international condemnation—and thus embarrassment for the U.S.-empowered Afghani government—Abdul Rahman was released under the pretext that he was mentally retarded, though most sources said he was not.⁷ It is quite common, in the cases of apostates and blasphemers under attack around the Muslim world, for any Muslims seeking to exonerate the accused to portray them as retarded.

BLASPHEMY

From Year One of the Muslim calendar (AD 622), Islam and its prophet have brooked little opposition—not even verbal opposition. In the words of Koran 33:57: “those who abuse Allah and His Messenger—Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter and prepared for them a humiliating punishment.”

Similarly, Koran 5:33 decrees that “the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] mischief is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land.”

Islam’s scholars agree that “wage war” most definitely includes verbal war. In fact, verbal attacks on Islam are often perceived as worse than physical attacks. As Ibn Taymiyya put it,

Muharaba [waging war against Islam] is of two types: physical and verbal. Waging war verbally against Islam may be worse than waging war physically—hence the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) used to kill those who waged war against Islam verbally, while letting off some of those who waged war against Islam physically. This ruling is to be applied more strictly after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Mischief may be caused by physical action or by words, but the damage caused by words is many times greater than that caused by physical action; and the goodness achieved by words in reforming may be many times greater than that achieved by physical action. It is proven that waging war against Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) verbally is worse and the efforts on earth to undermine religion by verbal means is more effective.⁸

This is not merely a medieval interpretation; many if not most of today’s Islamic scholars agree. After quoting the aforementioned

crucifixion verse of the Koran (5:33), Dr. Zakir Naik asserted in *Islamic Voice* in 2006, “In Islam, a person who has committed blasphemy can either be killed or crucified, or his opposite hands and feet can be cut off, or he can be exiled from that land.”⁹

These brutal penalties are based on the fact that, as Taymiyya points out, Muhammad himself—who once declared “whoever curses a prophet, kill him”—ordered the execution of many people simply for criticizing, questioning, or mocking him. Among those killed were women, such as Asma bint Marwan. According to the prophet’s earliest biographer, after Muhammad heard some of her poetry, which portrayed him as a murdering bandit, he called for her assassination, exclaiming:

“Will no one rid me of this woman?” Umayr, a zealous Muslim, decided to execute the Prophet’s wishes. That very night he crept into the writer’s home while she lay sleeping surrounded by her young children. There was one at her breast. Umayr removed the suckling babe and then plunged his sword into the poet. The next morning in the mosque, Muhammad, who was aware of the assassination, said, “You have helped Allah and his Apostle.” Umayr said, “She had five sons; should I feel guilty?” “No,” the prophet answered. “Killing her was as meaningless as two goats butting heads.”¹⁰

Likewise, Ka’b bin Ashraf’s anti-Islamic poetry so annoyed the prophet that he called for his assassination. When a young Muslim stepped up, saying he would be happy to kill the poet, provided he be permitted to lie and deceive his victim so as to win his confidence, Muhammad agreed—in one of the many precedents Muslims point to as justifying the use of deceit in Islam. After befriending the assassin, Ka’b was ambushed, killed, and decapitated, all to the prophet’s approval.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, there is consensus among all four schools of Islamic law that whoever curses Muhammad must be killed.¹² Fatwas litter the Internet calling for the death of those who “belittle,” “criticize,” or “mock” Muhammad.¹³

All of this is echoed in *The Conditions of Omar*. Honoring Islam and Muslims was a condition imposed on the Christians, and subsequently on all dhimmis. Any violation of that condition would void the pact. The conquered Christians were commanded “to honor the Muslims, show them the way, and rise up from our seats if they wish to sit down.”¹⁴ If Christians were to “honor” Muslims in such a slavish manner, it went without saying that they were never to criticize Islam or its prophet.

Islam’s blasphemy codes are probably the aspect of Islamic intolerance best known in the West today—because mayhem and murders routinely break out whenever Western people criticize Islam and its prophet. YouTube videos and European cartoons about Muhammad, academic papal speeches, and even teddy bears have occasioned mass riots, death, and destruction all around the Islamic world. These incidents may seem surprising, but they are nothing new. A thirteenth-century text written by a European Christian tells how the “Saracens treated with great cruelty those Christians who spoke ill of the law of Muhammad.”¹⁵

PROSELYTISM

Not only is preaching to Muslims about Christianity and thus tempting them to convert clearly banned in Islam, but it is also closely associated with Islam’s apostasy and blasphemy laws. If apostasy from Islam is a terrible crime worthy of death, clearly those responsible for enticing Muslims to apostatize are also guilty. If speaking against the prophet is a reprehensible crime worthy of death, then clearly preaching to Muslims about Christ, the resurrection, the Trinity, and salvation through grace and faith—all doctrines that contradict and thus give the lie to Islam and Muhammad’s teachings—is great blasphemy.

As with apostasy and blasphemy, the Islamic ban on proselytism is so well known that it is almost pointless quoting sources. But consider *The Conditions of Omar* on preaching Christianity to Muslims. Conquered Christians were ordered,

Not to produce a cross or [Christian] book in the markets of the Muslims....

Not to display any signs of polytheism [that is, belief in the Trinity], nor make our religion appealing, nor call or proselytize anyone to it.... Not to prevent any of our relatives who wish to enter into Islam.

All these points are still in full force around the Islamic world today: 1) Christians are not to produce any Christian books—especially the Bible—around Muslims, lest they cause doubt and temptation; 2) Christians are not to make Christianity “appealing, nor call anyone to it”; and 3) in complete contradiction to Islam’s own position concerning apostates *from* Islam, who must be killed, Christians are not to prevent any of their relatives from converting *to* Islam.

To appreciate the continuity of Islam’s ban on Christian proselytism, consider how closely—nearly verbatim—even those Muslim nations that are hailed in the West for being “moderate” follow the points above. For example, “according to the Maldives Religious Unity Regulations, it is illegal in the Maldives to propagate any faith other than Islam or to engage in any effort to convert anyone to any religion other than Islam. It is also illegal to display in public any symbols or slogans belonging to any religion other than Islam, or creating interest in such articles.”¹⁶ Violating the Religious Unity Act carries stiff penalties—fines and imprisonment for two to five years. This is the position of a modern and moderate Muslim nation.

History has seen many Christians share the Gospel with Muslims, only to pay the ultimate price for it. One of the most memorable stories concerns St. Francis of Assisi, who traveled with fellow Franciscans to the Middle East in 1219 during the Crusades, specifically to challenge Islam and convert Muslims to Christianity.

Early sources indicate that Malik al-Kamil, the Egyptian sultan who granted audience to the medieval missionaries, was interested in what they had to say; he even asked Islam’s clerics to debate them. However, just as Muslim clerics do today, the latter “instead insisted that they [the Christians] be killed, in accordance with Islamic law.” When St. Francis pointedly asked the sultan to convert to Christianity, al-Kamil confessed, “I could not do that. My people would stone me.” (Indeed, the sultan

was eventually attacked “for his tolerant attitude towards Christians and was accused of failing to be a ‘fervent Muslim.’”) ¹⁷ This is a theme that recurs regularly throughout Muslim history. Centuries earlier, as recorded in the “Dialogue of the Monk of Bet Hale with an Arab Notable,” the latter is recorded as saying, “I testify that were it not for fear of the government and of shame before men, many [Muslims] would become Christians.” ¹⁸

While St. Francis managed to enter the lions’ den and emerge alive, other monks sent to the Muslim world—such as the six “Moroccan Martyrs,” who were imprisoned, tortured, and beheaded by Morocco’s sultan himself for preaching Christ in 1220—did not fare as well.

Nearly a millennium after the meeting between the Christian saint and the Egyptian sultan, there is still little freedom for Christians who wish to share the Gospel with Muslims. Consider, for instance, the life and exploits of Father Zakaria Botros. ¹⁹ A Coptic Christian priest who has spent his life proselytizing Muslims—as his elder brother before him did, until he was murdered and his tongue severed—Father Zakaria’s experiences mirror those of St. Francis. According to *Defying Death: Zakaria Botros, Apostle to Islam*, after the priest began preaching to Muslims in Egypt, he was imprisoned and tortured; when he began baptizing Muslims, his life was deemed forfeit. He eventually managed to escape to the West. ²⁰

Undeterred and now in his late seventies, he has his own satellite station, al-Fady TV, dedicated to scrutinizing Islam and preaching Christianity. And just like St. Francis, Father Zakaria constantly invites Islam’s scholars and clerics to debate him—only to receive death threats, including a multi-million dollar bounty on his head. Because he has publicized many unflattering things about the Muslim prophet—things that many Muslims never knew—responses have included live Muslim callers hysterically promising to find the priest and cut his head off.

Like the Egyptian sultan who concluded that he could not convert because “My people would stone me,” many Muslim converts appearing on and calling in to his show reveal that their apostasy from Islam has put them in grave danger. Many are outcasts; many are in hiding; and others are on the run for their lives, often fleeing from their own families.

The effects of such “multimedia proselytization” are considerable. A few years back, Al Jazeera even aired a segment highlighting what it characterized as an “unprecedented evangelical raid.” Other stations, like Haya TV (“Life TV”) air thought-provoking programs such as *Su’al Jari’* (“Daring Question”), hosted by Brother Rashid, a Muslim apostate to Christianity, and *Al Dalil* (“The Proof”), hosted by Brother Wahid. From TV and computer screens they all effectively but safely confront Muslims on the truths of Islam vis-à-vis Christianity. If the many callers to these shows—often Muslims who have converted to Christianity, many clandestinely—are any indication, multimedia proselytization has been relatively successful despite the consequences apostates face.

THE TRUTH BEHIND ISLAM’S ANTI-FREEDOM LAWS

The laws against apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism are draconian, but there are exceptions and complexities that shed light on the real purpose and effects of Islam’s strictures against freedom of speech and religion. There are two major exceptions to these laws enshrined in Sharia, cases when the laws against apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism can be disregarded: 1) when they are broken under duress—for example, a Muslim is threatened with torture and death if he does not curse Muhammad and apostatize from Islam (see Koran 3:28 and 16:106); or 2) as a stratagem of war, as when Muhammad permitted a Muslim to feign apostasy and to blaspheme his name to win the confidence of the poet Ka’b in order to assassinate him. Likewise, Muhammad once commanded Na’im bin Mas’ud, a young convert from a tribe that refused to submit to Muhammad, to conceal his new Muslim identity, go back to his tribe—which he cajoled with a perfidious “You are my stock and my family, the dearest of men to me”—only to betray them to Muhammad’s waiting jihadis.²¹

In fact, according to Sharia, recanting Islam is not only permitted but, in certain situations, obligatory. In this Islamic law completely differs from Christian tradition. While countless Christians, past and present,

have been martyred for refusing to renounce Christ, Muslims who are forced to choose between recanting Islam and suffering persecution are expected to lie and feign apostasy. Several prominent Muslim jurists maintain that, because the Koran commands Muslims not to be instrumental in their own deaths (see Koran 2:195 and 4:29), Muslims are permitted to say anything to preserve their lives—including recanting Islam and cursing Muhammad. Indeed, in Muhammad's own lifetime, whenever his followers fell into the hands of their non-Muslim opponents, they would often renounce Muhammad and Islam rather than suffer torture or death.²²

Likewise, because apostasy is so serious a crime in Islam, deserving of death, various safeguards are provided for the accused to be exonerated. Simply declaring the Islamic profession of faith, the *shehada*—"There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah"—in front of Muslim witnesses often is enough for the apostasy charge to be dropped. As most Muslim scholars agree, Islam requires only formal conformity—regardless of what is in the heart of the individual Muslim, which only Allah can ascertain.²³

In fact the first large-scale persecution of apostates from Islam, known as the Ridda Wars, literally the "apostasy wars," had little to do with faith. Carl Brockelmann, historian of Islam, wrote that "religious motives played scarcely any role at all" in these wars. Medieval chronicler Ahmed ibn Yahya al-Baladhuri (d. 892) provided the real motive: "When Abu Bakr was proclaimed caliph [following the death of Muhammad], certain Arab tribes apostatized from Islam and withheld the *sadaqa* ["charity" money], some saying 'We shall observe prayer but not pay *zakat*.'" ²⁴

But merely praying was not good enough; not paying the money amounted to apostasy. Accordingly the revered Abu Bakr launched a jihad that saw thousands of Arabs slaughtered, burned alive, and crucified, especially under the command of General Khalid bin al-Waild, the ruthless "Sword of Allah."

These first apostates from Islam were not attacked for rejecting the spiritual truths of Islam or the prophethood of Muhammad; they were attacked because they rocked the boat. Quiet apostates who lack conviction in Islam but who do not rock the boat—and these are many, often

referred to in the West as “moderate Muslims”—are generally left unmolested by the sword of Islam.

Consider the modern-day case of the Egyptian Muhammad Hegazy. Not only did he convert to Christianity, but he also took the unprecedented step of trying to update his government I.D. card to reflect his conversion. (In Egypt and many other Muslim countries, a person’s religion is indicated on his I.D.) Both family and clerics alike threatened him with death. Then in February 2008, a judge ruled that Hegazy “can believe whatever he wants in his heart, but on paper he can’t convert”—in other words, he cannot rock the boat.²⁵

It is the same with Islam’s blasphemy law. It does not target people who disbelieve or mock Islam in their hearts, but rather those who do so openly and publicly, creating doubt and “mischief,” which, as Ibn Taymiyya explained, are more dangerous to Islam than physical attacks.

Thus Islamic jurists and clerics often conflate Islam’s three separate laws against freedom—forbidding apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism. The different things forbidden by these different laws are all nonviolent acts that nonetheless weaken Islam. For example, a 2008 fatwa from the European Council for Fatwa and Research, ostensibly about apostasy, nevertheless alludes to blasphemy and proselytism when it decrees that “not every apostate should be killed, but rather only those who openly commit apostasy, or call for fitna, or voice harmful things against Allah and His Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers.” Obviously, any Muslim who openly converts to Christianity and seeks to live as an acknowledged Christian is going to be seen as one who “openly commit[s] apostasy,” and when he talks to Muslims about Christianity he will be accused of proselytizing and blaspheming—for then he is perceived as “call[ing] for fitna, or voic[ing] harmful things against Allah and His Prophet.”²⁶

WHY CHRISTIANS ARE SINGLED OUT

Having examined the nature of apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism in Islamic law, let us now consider how and why it is that Christians are especially prone to being persecuted by Islam’s anti-freedom laws. There are three main reasons:

1. *Christianity is the largest religion in the world.* There are Christians practically everywhere around the globe, including in much of the Muslim world. Moreover, because much of the territory that Islam seized was originally Christian—including the Middle East and North Africa, the region that today is called the “Arab world”—Muslims are regularly confronted with vestiges of Christianity. In Egypt alone, which was a major intellectual center of early Christianity before the Islamic invasions, there may be some sixteen million Coptic Christians according to the baptismal registries of the Coptic Church.²⁷ In short, because of their sheer numbers alone, Christians in the Muslim world are much more likely than others to clash with Islam’s three anti-freedom laws.
2. *Christianity is a proselytizing faith that seeks to win over converts.* No other major religion—not Buddhism, Hinduism, or Judaism—has this missionary aspect. These other faiths tend to be coextensive with certain ethnicities. The only other major faith that has as strong a missionary component as Christianity is Islam itself—the one religion that Muslims obviously cannot “apostatize” to. Most Muslims who apostatize to other religions apostatize to Christianity, and hence suffer persecution as Christians. Because Christianity is the only religion that is actively confronting Muslims with the truths of its own message, it is the primary religion to be accused of proselytizing. And by publicly uttering teachings that contradict Muhammad’s, Christians fall afoul of the blasphemy law as well.
3. *Christianity is the quintessential religion of martyrdom.* From its inception—beginning with Jesus, and followed by his disciples and countless others in the early church—many Christians have accepted martyrdom rather than betray their faith, in ancient times at the hands of pagan Romans, and in medieval and modern times at the hands

of pious Muslims and other persecutors. Few other religions encourage their adherents to embrace death rather than recant their faith, as Christ himself did: “But whoever denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:33; see also Luke 14:33). As was mentioned above, Islam teaches Muslims to dissemble or publicly renounce their faith—not just when their lives are threatened, but even as a stratagem of war. Moreover, other religions and sects approve of dissimulation to preserve their adherents’ lives. A nineteenth-century missionary observed that in Iran, “Bahaism enjoys *taqiyya* [concealment of faith] as a duty, but Christianity demands public profession; and hence in Persia it is far easier to become a Bahai than to become a Christian.”²⁸

To summarize, because of their large numbers around the globe, including in the Muslim world, Christians are most likely to clash with Islam’s anti-freedom laws. Because sharing the Gospel, or “witnessing,” is a dominant element of Christianity, Christians are most likely to fall afoul of Islam’s blasphemy and proselytism laws, as even the barest pro-Christian talk is by necessity a challenge to the legitimacy of Islam, and thus blasphemy. Because boldness in the face of certain death—martyrdom, dying for the faith—is as old as Christianity itself and integral to it, Christians are especially prone to defy Islam’s anti-freedom laws, whether by openly proclaiming Christianity or by refusing to recant it. Apostates to Christianity are much more obvious in their apostasy—owning Bibles, going to church—than lapsed Muslims who do nothing to arouse suspicion (not going to mosque or reading the Koran is not proof that a Muslim has apostatized). Enthusiastic Christians sharing the Gospel are not just breaking Islam’s proselytism laws, but are much more likely to transgress laws against blasphemy as well by challenging the truths of Islam.

Plus, there is one other exacerbating factor. More than any other religion, Christianity is Islam’s historical enemy. Converting to Christianity is seen as something of a double betrayal. Not only is the convert an

apostate from Islam—which, as we have seen, can be overlooked as long as the apostate keeps his apostasy to himself, as apostates often do—but the open convert is publicly declaring that he has found something better than Islam in its nemesis, Christianity.

Thus in November 2011 in Nigeria, Boko Haram Muslims shot and killed two children of a former member because he “betrayed” Islam when he apostatized to Christianity—in a very dramatic manner. According to a Christian source close to the convert, the man, a jihadi at the time, “was poised to slit the throat of his Christian victim” during a jihadi raid in northern Nigeria that killed at least 130 Christians, when, not unlike Saul of Tarsus (or St. Paul), “he was suddenly struck with the weight of the evil he was about to commit.” He dropped his machete and fled to a church close by, where he pleaded for help. The pastor “immediately met with the confessed killer and joyfully led him to Christ.... After meeting the Lord, the converted terrorist [and] murderer called his former colleagues to testify what had happened to him without disclosing where he was.... Upon discovering the man’s conversion to Christianity, Boko Haram members invaded his home, kidnapped his two children and informed him that they were going to execute them *in retribution for his disloyalty to Islam*. Clutching his phone, the man heard the sound of the guns that murdered his children [emphasis added].”²⁹

Islam’s anti-freedom laws target people of all or no religions. Many outspoken Muslim apostates in the West, for example, who never converted to Christianity, must fear execution should they ever fall into the hands of their former coreligionists. However, they are here now, alive and well in the West and warning us, precisely because they were not challenging the spiritual truths of Islam then, when they were living under its shadow—and why should they have been? If life is limited to the now, as it is in the secular worldview, why risk death, especially when merely not rocking the boat, as many “moderate Muslims” do, will save them?

Likewise, countless are the secular, Western people who habitually blaspheme against Islam. But they live in the West, away from Sharia domination, and so are generally immune from its draconian punishments. Ironically, the people who often suffer most when Western secularists offend Muslims are the Christian minorities of the Islamic world.

Whether in the time of the medieval Crusades or during Operation Desert Storm, Muslims often conflate the Christians in their midst with the Western enemy and punish them accordingly, under the concept of collective punishment (which we will explore in more detail later).

Thus Islam's anti-freedom laws, while applicable to lapsed Muslims and secular people who criticize Islam, have been especially devastating to Muslims who convert to Christianity, and to Christians who speak about their religion.

WITNESSES FOR CHRIST

Innumerable Christians have been persecuted and killed because of Islam's anti-freedom laws throughout Islam's nearly fourteen centuries of existence. But the first fact to recognize is that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, who they were, what they were accused of, and how they died will never be known. Countless and nameless they must remain—just as countless Christians suffering today are nameless.³⁰

However, a few books, most of them little known, contain documented cases, often limited to one region or era. One such book, *Witnesses for Christ*, lists the many Christians known to have been killed or executed in connection with Islam's anti-freedom laws during the Ottoman period of 1437–1860. It discusses the Orthodox Christian “Neomartyrs”—a term coined for those killed for their faith after the sacking of Constantinople in 1453. (It should be noted that Orthodox Christianity has been the one Christian denomination most persecuted by Islam throughout history, as the onetime eastern lands of Byzantium were all Orthodox, and most of the indigenous Christian communities of today's Middle East are Orthodox.)

Witnesses for Christ offers many interesting facts and statistics. Christians were tortured to death, burned at the stake, thrown on iron spikes, dismembered, stoned, stabbed, shot at, drowned, pummeled to death, impaled, and crucified. Five Christians were “literally cut to pieces while still alive.” The book offers two hundred such stories. Its compiler, the late Nomikos Michael Vaporis, correctly noted, “These numbers, of course, are not completely accurate, for all who have dealt with the

question are unanimous in their belief that the number of Neomartyrs is far greater because many left no record of their martyrdoms. In fact there are some Neomartyrs who are known to us by their name and very little else.”³¹

This book makes unequivocally clear that the same exact anti-freedom laws under which Christians are persecuted and killed today were the laws under which Christians were persecuted and killed from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries—demonstrating an amazing degree of continuity that simply cannot be denied. The overwhelming majority of those persecuted were killed in accordance with Islam’s three aforementioned anti-freedom laws:

Apostasy: These martyrs included Muslim converts to Christianity, as well as Christian converts to Islam—who had converted for wealth, social station, or marriage, or because they were tricked into converting—but later apostatized by becoming Christian again.

Blasphemy: These martyrs included Christians who spoke against or insulted Islam’s prophet Muhammad as well as those who were innocent but whom Muslims falsely accused for myriad reasons including envy, revenge, or sheer malice. Some Christians were accused of blasphemy for standing up for themselves or for Christianity, for coming to the aid of fellow Christians, or even for rejecting Muslims’ sexual advances.

Proselytism: These martyrs included Christians preaching to or baptizing Muslims who wished to convert to Christianity. Others were accused of proselytism simply for talking about religion, or publicly comparing Muslim and Christian teachings.

The only way the Christian victims chronicled in *Witnesses for Christ* could avoid being killed was to convert to Islam. (As we shall see, the same thing is often true today.) According to Vaporis,

The vast majority of Neomartyrs, however, found themselves in a position brought on by a variety of circumstances and events where they had to either convert to the Muslim faith or, if they refused, stand as witnesses for their Orthodox Christian beliefs and die as a consequence. In these instances Orthodox Christians were actually being threatened with the loss of life, *with no real attempt on the part of Muslims to convince them of the truth of Islam. It would appear that the Muslims involved were primarily interested in numbers, relying on the pressures of a social consensus in Islamic society and the threat of death to ensure that converts would remain Muslims.* [Emphasis added.]³²

Even in the minor details, identical patterns of persecution emerge. Because many if not most Christians who converted to Islam throughout the centuries did so not out of religious conviction but simply to improve their social status or to avoid persecution, it appears that some were struck with remorse, causing a change of heart followed by a reconversion to Christianity. They were then accused of apostasy, attacked, and often savagely killed.

This particular theme appears regularly not just in *Witnesses for Christ*, but in older accounts as well. For example, in 770, Cyrus of Harran converted to Islam, regretted it, and returned to Christianity. He was tortured in an effort to make him renounce Christ; he refused, and was executed. And “like a number of the other neomartyrs, John [of Phanijoit, a Copt] had converted to Islam and then, having repented, reconverted to Christianity, thereby making him liable in Muslim eyes to the death penalty for the crime of apostasy from Islam.”³³ Authorities tried to get him simply to accept nominal Islam, but he staunchly refused and was executed. Sometimes such killings happened en masse:

In 1389, a great procession of Copts who had accepted Muhammad under fear of death, marched through Cairo. Repenting of their apostasy, they now wished to atone for it by the inevitable consequence of returning to Christianity. So

as they marched, they announced that they believed in Christ and renounced Muhammad. They were seized and all the men were beheaded one after another in an open square before the women. But this did not terrify the women; so they, too, were all martyred.³⁴

Turning to the present, one finds the same pattern still being played out. Consider Pakistan alone. In February 2012, a Muslim mob attacked a sixty-year-old Christian woman named Seema Bibi because, six months after converting to Islam, she reconverted back to Christianity. Angry Muslims “tortured Seema, shaved her head, garlanded her with shoes and paraded her through the village streets.” Afterwards, she received more threats of “dire consequences” from Islamic clerics, prompting her and her family to flee the region.³⁵ Similarly, in July 2012, it was reported that a Christian couple, Imran James and Nazia Masih, have been on the run since they reconverted to Christianity, after embracing Islam back in 2006. Upon learning that the couple had returned to Christianity, neighboring Muslims attacked and persecuted them. One of the husband’s best friends abducted and tortured him and beat his wife. “[One] should have the freedom to choose the religion one wishes to follow,” lamented the husband.³⁶

RECENT EXAMPLES OF ANTI-FREEDOM LAWS

The following recent stories represent a sampling of what Christians are suffering under Islam’s laws against apostasy, blasphemy, and proselytism. Oftentimes Christians are persecuted under two or all three of Islam’s anti-freedom laws. For example, in May 2011 in Algeria, a judge “stunned the Christian community” by sentencing Siaghi Krime, a Muslim convert to Christianity (an apostate), to a five-year prison term and a fine of \$200,000 Algerian dinars—even though prosecutors had only asked for a two-year imprisonment and a \$50,000 dinar fine. Krime’s crime was to give a CD about Christianity to a Muslim (proselytism), who later claimed the CD insulted Muslim prophet Muhammad (blasphemy).³⁷ Even so, the

examples below are organized according to the particular anti-freedom feature of Sharia law most central to the case in question.

APOSTATES: RECANT OR DIE

Like attacks on churches, some of the most heinous apostasy-related attacks are intentionally planned for Christian holy days.

On December 24, 2011—Christmas Eve—Muslims in Christian-majority Uganda threw acid on a church pastor outside his church, severely disfiguring him, blinding one eye and damaging the other. Pastor of the ten-thousand-strong Gospel Life International Pentecostal church, Umar Mulinde, formerly a Muslim, explained his ordeal: “I was attacked by a man who claimed to be a Christian. He called out to me shouting ‘pastor, pastor,’ and as I turned to see who he was, he poured acid which burnt part of my face. As I turned away from the attacker, another man poured the liquid on my back and ran away shouting ‘Allah Akbar.’” Mulinde originally “came from a strict Muslim family and his father was an imam.” Umar was the fifty-second child to be born to the polygamist Muslim leader. The son went on to become a sheikh himself before converting to Christianity in 1993, a decision that caused a strong reaction in the Muslim community. The thirty-nine-year-old father of six was also a leading figure in a campaign to block the introduction of Sharia courts into Uganda. After being taken to a hospital, where specialists struggled to restore his vision, Umar was relocated to an Israeli medical center for advanced treatment. According to his wife, “The main point of contention between Muslims and Christians in Uganda is that *Muslims are yet to embrace the reality of freedom of worship or coexistence, but Muslims always think that any person who doesn’t believe like them is an enemy who deserves to be killed*” [emphasis added].³⁸

Spotlight on Iran

Despite the fact that Christians reportedly make up less than 1 percent of its population, Iran is one of the Middle Eastern countries most associated with persecution for apostasy. This is because the Islamist

regime itself, as opposed to vigilante mobs, actively persecutes apostates there—though usually under different pretexts, for instance, “disloyalty to the state” or “calling into question the Islamic foundations of the Republic.” Nevertheless, the apostasy case of Pastor Youssef Nadarkhani received widespread media attention, placing the spotlight on Iran’s abuse of apostates.

The father of two and onetime evangelical house church pastor was arrested in late 2009, found guilty of apostasy, and sentenced to death. The pastor was kept in solitary confinement, routinely tortured, and pressured to renounce Christ and convert to Islam. He staunchly refused. At one point, his wife was also arrested and charged with apostasy and sentenced to life in prison, but she was later released.³⁹

While Nadarkhani’s experiences were not new or unusual in Iran, news of his plight made it to the mainstream media in the West, prompting heavy criticism of Iran’s Islamist regime. In response, Iranian authorities changed the whole story in an attempt to make it more palatable to Western sensibilities—they said Nadarkhani was not being executed for apostasy, but because he had been found guilty of being a “Zionist traitor,” a “rapist,” an “extortionist,” and a “brothel owner.”⁴⁰

Such distortions did not square with the fact that Iran’s Supreme Court ruling had earlier decreed that Nadarkhani

is convicted of turning his back on Islam, the greatest religion the prophesy of Mohammad at the age of 19. He has often participated in Christian worship and organized home church services, evangelizing and has been baptized and baptized others, converting Muslims to Christianity. He has been accused of breaking Islamic Law that from puberty (15 years according to Islamic law) until the age of 19 the year 1996, he was raised a Muslim in a Muslim home. During court trials, he denied the prophesy of Mohammad and the authority of Islam. He has stated that he is a Christian and no longer Muslim.⁴¹

Because Nadarkhani had become an international liability for the Iranian regime—among other things, exposing the hypocrisy behind Iran’s humanitarian arguments against Israel—in September 2012 (soon after Canada severed diplomatic ties with Iran, citing among other things basic human rights concerns), the imprisoned pastor was acquitted of the apostasy charge but found guilty of proselytizing to Muslims but released because the court determined he had already served the requisite prison time for that crime. Then, on Christmas Day—to add insult to injury—authorities arrested him yet again, citing “improperly completed paperwork.”⁴²

Although Nadarkhani’s case is well known, the fact is that it represents only the tip of the iceberg of Christian persecution under the mullahs. Both before and after Nadarkhani, apostates to Christianity have been regularly targeted. Beginning in the 1990s, authorities even used “death squads” against apostates. They formally executed at least one convert to Christianity, Pastor Hossein Soodmand. In 2006 the Iranian regime was described as “currently engaged in a systematic campaign to track down and reconvert or kill those who have changed their religion from Islam.”⁴³ Recently, however, having learned a lesson from the Nadarkhani debacle, Islamic authorities couch their charges against apostates in political language, often accusing them of being in cahoots with foreign powers—though human rights organizations monitoring the situation insist that this is just a cover for the apostasy law.

While examples of harassment, imprisonment, and even killings of apostates in Iran are many, just a few examples from recent months follow here:

In July 2012, a six-year prison sentence for Pastor Farshid Fathi Malayeri was upheld—though, as Barnabas Aid reported, “the political charges [against him] are a pretext for locking up the pastor, a convert from Islam to Christianity, on account of his faith.”⁴⁴

Another prominent house church pastor, Benham Irani, remains behind bars even as his family expresses concerns that he may die from continued abuse and beatings, which have led to internal bleeding and other ailments. The verdict against him contains text that describes

the pastor as an “apostate” who “can be killed.” According to one human rights activist, “His ‘crimes’ were being a pastor and possessing Christian materials.” He is being beat in jail and getting sick, to the point that his hair has “turned fully grey.”⁴⁵

In January 2012, Leila Mohammadi, a convert to Christianity, was arrested when security agents raided her house. Locked away for five months in Iran’s “notorious” Evin prison, she was eventually given an official sentence of two years’ imprisonment there.⁴⁶

Mohabat News reported in June 2012 that five months after five apostates to Christianity were arrested their condition and fate remained unknown. They were accused of “attending house church services, promoting Christianity, propagating against the regime and disturbing national security.” The report explained the strategies being used against apostates: being imprisoned for 130 days without word “is an obvious example of physical and mental abuse of the detainees. . . . One of the prison guards openly told one of these Christian detainees that all these pressures and uncertainties are intended to make them flee the country after they are released. . . .”⁴⁷

In January 2012 Gelareh Bagherzadeh, a young woman who had recently converted to Christianity and who was an outspoken activist against the Islamic regime, was found dead “slumped over the steering wheel of her Nissan Altima steps from her home with a single gunshot wound to her head.”⁴⁸

In February 2012 Iranian authorities “arrested Christian converts from Islam,” up to ten of them, “while they were meeting for worship at a home in the southern city of Shiraz.” The report from World Watch Monitor adds, “Authorities often detain, question and apply pressure on converts from Islam, viewing them as elements of Western propaganda set against the Iranian regime; as a result, the converts are forced to worship in secret.”⁴⁹

In March 2012, authorities arrested 12 more converts to Christianity living in Isfahan, the country’s third largest city, in what is seen as a tactic to discourage Muslims from attending official churches—including one man who was reportedly taken into custody on March 2 when he

returned home from work. “Security authorities raided his home and seized him without explanation.”⁵⁰

In October 2011, a “group of four officers engaged in a commando-style raid on the house” of Fariborz Arazm, a Muslim convert to Christianity, arresting him, confiscating his Bible, and “transferring him to an unknown location. . . . His family was also threatened to remain silent and not to talk about this incident to anyone.” The *Worthy News* report of this incident also mentions another Christian named “Mohammad”—that is, an apostate—who was arrested and interrogated “for the charge of Christianity.”⁵¹

In August 2012, a report sourcing *Mohabat News* said that Iranian authorities “raise[d] unsubstantiated charges” against five arrested converts to Christianity to “pressure” and “intimidate” them, including by falsely accusing them of desecrating the Koran and holding them for indefinite periods. “Although their situation is still unclear six months after their arrest, there is no doubt that the Christians’ only crime is related to their faith in Jesus Christ.”⁵²

More recently, in October 2012, several reports appeared of Christian men and women, especially Evangelical Protestants and Muslim apostates, being “dragged to prisons.” According to a council member of the Church of Iran house church movement, “‘We have learned that at least 100, but perhaps as many as 400 people, have been detained over the last 10 days. . . . it has become clear that Protestant Christians are now viewed as enemy number one of the state.’” Some of those arrested, after serving time and being tormented, are “‘forced to say they will no longer attend church services in exchange for freedom.’” At least five apostates were confined in cells housing dangerous criminals on charges of “creating illegal groups,” “participating in a house church service,” “propagation against the Islamic regime,” and “defaming Islamic holy figures through Christian evangelizing.”⁵³

Spotlight on Somalia

If Christians are being harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and sometimes killed in Iran, they are being butchered in Somalia. “All Somali Christians

must be killed according to Sharia. A Muslim can never become a Christian, but he can become an apostate. Such people do not have a place in Somalia; we will never recognize their existence, and we will slaughter them.” These words, spoken in 2006 by influential Somali Sheikh Nur Barud, sum up the situation for the very few Christians remaining in Somalia, who must live in hiding. The al-Qaeda-linked Islamic organization al-Shabaab—“the Youth”—which has vowed to rid Somalia of any trace of Christianity, has been at the forefront of slaughtering converts to Christianity in the name of Islam.

In January 2011, Muslims from al-Shabaab slaughtered a mother of four after discovering she had converted to Christianity. Asha Mberwa, thirty-six, was murdered on the outskirts of Mogadishu, in a “ritual slaying”: after she was “arrested” by al-Shabaab in front of her home, members slit her throat in front of villagers who came to witness. “She is survived by her children—ages 12, 8, 6, and 4—and her husband, who was not home when she was apprehended.”⁵⁴

In August 2009 four Christians who worked for a human aid organization helping orphans were abducted and beheaded “after they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ.” Their bodies were not returned to their families for burial, because “Somalia does not have cemeteries for infidels”—according to a local Muslim calling himself “the Sword of Islam.” One eyewitness said, “All the four apostates were given an opportunity to return to Islam to be released but they all declined the generous offer.”⁵⁵

In February 2012, al-Shabaab Muslims beheaded another Muslim convert to Christianity, Zakaria Hussein Omar, twenty-six. He was abducted and murdered less than ten miles from Mogadishu, the capital. According to a close friend, who identified the body, “We have been communicating with Omar, and he was sharing with me his life as a Christian. . . . Last year he mentioned to me that his life was in danger when the NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] he worked for was banned by the al-Shabaab.”⁵⁶

In September 2011, Juma Nuradin Kamil, another Muslim convert to Christianity, was abducted and decapitated, his body later found dumped in the road. According to a leader of the underground church,

“It is usual for the al-Shabaab to decapitate those they suspect to have embraced the Christian faith, or sympathizers of western ideals.”⁵⁷

In October 2011, after invading the home of twenty-one-year-old Hassan Adawe Adan, in the words of a witness, “Two al-Shabaab members dragged him out of his house, and after 10 minutes they fired several shots on him. . . . He then died immediately.” The two militants then shouted “Allahu Akbar” before fleeing. “Adan, single and living with his Muslim family, was said to have secretly converted to Christianity” some months earlier. Area Christians said they believed someone had told the Islamic militants of Adan’s new faith: “This incident is making other converts live in extreme fear, as the militants always keep an open eye to anyone professing the Christian faith,” said one source.⁵⁸

In January 2012, Sofia Osman, a twenty-year-old Muslim convert to Christianity, was “paraded before a cheering crowd” and “publicly flogged.” She had been imprisoned since November in an al-Shabaab camp, and “the public whipping was meant to mark her release.” She received forty lashes as hundreds of Muslim spectators jeered. Bloodied and battered, she passed out. According to an eyewitness, “I saw her faint. I thought she had died, but soon she regained consciousness and her family took her away.” In the days following her ordeal, she appeared traumatized and unable to talk. She has since fled the region.⁵⁹

In September 2012, al-Shabaab Muslims shot three converts to Christianity. The men had converted while in Ethiopia in 2005, but pretended to be Muslim. When more zealous Muslims became suspicious, “militants” attacked the apostates, bursting into their homes and opening fire.⁶⁰

Sometimes the families of apostates are attacked; sometimes they are killed as well. In 2009, when a secret convert to Christianity and leader of the underground church fled his home because al-Shabaab Muslims were coming for him, they took his children and beheaded them instead.⁶¹ And in January 2012 al-Shabaab members arrested a Muslim father after two of his children converted to Christianity and fled, accusing him of “‘failing to raise his sons as good Muslims,’ because ‘good Muslims cannot convert to Christianity.’” According to a Somali Christian leader, “This tactic [of arresting parents for conversion of children] is apparently

intended to discourage Muslims from converting to Christianity since their Muslim parents could be held accountable for their conversion. The Somali Islamists have previously tried other failed harsh tactics such as summary executions of converts to minimize the number of Muslims converting to Christianity. Please pray for the Somali Christians, especially those living in Islamist controlled areas in southern Somalia.”⁶²

Spotlight on Egypt

A 2010 Pew Research Center poll found that 84 percent of Egyptian Muslims believe those who leave Islam should be killed.⁶³ Nor is death for apostasy in Egypt a phenomenon of recent years. E. W. Lane, an Arabist who traveled around Egypt in the 1820s disguised as a Muslim, was one of the first modern Europeans to witness the execution of an apostate—in this case, a female convert to Christianity who was exposed by her Coptic cross tattoo. In Lane’s own words,

Apostasy from the faith of Islam is considered a most heinous sin, and must be punished with death, unless the apostate will recant on being thrice warned. I once saw a woman paraded through the streets of Cairo, and afterwards taken down to the Nile to be drowned, for having apostatized from the faith of Muhammad, and having married a Christian. Unfortunately, she tattooed a blue cross on her arm, which led to her detection by one of her former friends in a bath. She was mounted upon a high-saddled ass, such as ladies in Egypt usually ride, and very respectably dressed, attended by soldiers, and surrounded by a rabble, who, instead of commiserating, uttered loud imprecations against her. The Kadee [or *qadi*, a Muslim judge] who passed sentence upon her, exhorted her, in vain, to return to her former faith. She was taken in a boat into the midst of the river, stripped nearly naked, strangled and then thrown into the stream.⁶⁴

Little has changed in Egypt since the 1820s. In 2007 Eman Muhammad Al-Sayed, a twenty-six-year-old woman who had converted to

Christianity, was violently attacked by her relatives in a park where she was walking with her husband, also a Muslim convert to Christianity. She had escaped her family four years earlier, gotten married, and lived in hiding ever since. As her family was beating her and vowing to kill her in public, police eventually intervened, taking the woman into custody and handing her over to state security, who proceeded to strip her naked and take photographs of her to shame her; they also “subjected Al-Sayed to severe torture, including electrocution of sensitive parts of her body.” She was eventually handed over to her family, who dragged her away from the police station screaming, even as they violently beat her some more before forcing her in a waiting car and driving away.⁶⁵

There are dozens of cases in Egypt of Muslims apostatizing to Christianity only to be attacked by their family, neighbors, colleagues, or the notorious mob. But as in Iran, perhaps the more telling cases are the ones that actually involve Egyptian courts and authorities ruling in accordance with Sharia, such as the aforementioned case of Muhammad Hegazy, who was not permitted to change his religion from Islam to Christianity on his I.D. card. In February 2009, another apostate, Maher Al-Gohary, fifty-eight, tried to officially convert to Christianity—only to be accused of apostasy, with prosecutors calling for the death penalty. As Maher himself put it: “Our rights in Egypt, as Christians or converts, are less than the rights of animals. We are deprived of social and civil rights, deprived of our inheritance and left to the fundamentalists to be killed. Nobody bothers to investigate or care about us.”

He has been attacked in the street, spat upon, beaten, and threatened by text messages and phone calls—all simply because he petitioned to be granted the right to convert to Christianity. Eventually he and his daughter fled to Syria, once a moderate nation under secularist Bashar Assad. However, since the “Arab Spring” reached there, too—with Syrian Christians under attack by jihadis—in 2011, Maher and his daughter managed to flee to France where they applied for asylum.⁶⁶

A December 2010 report by World Watch Monitor tells of Ashraf Thabet, a forty-five-year-old Muslim who apostatized to Christianity. He lost his wife, children, and business—all in keeping with Sharia law—and he was further charged with defaming Islam under Article

98(f) of the Egyptian Penal Code. According to Thabet, the charges against him stem from his six-year soul search for spiritual truth, which culminated with his conversion to Christianity: “During his search, he shared his doubts about Islam and told others what he was learning about Jesus Christ. Local religious authorities, incensed at Thabet’s ideas, notified Egypt’s State Security Intelligence service (SSI), which arrested and charged him with defamation.” Because his case has not yet been tried, “Thabet lives in limbo and is subject to a regular barrage of death threats from people in his community in Port Said in northeast Egypt.”⁶⁷

In the summer of 2010, Nagla Imam, a lawyer, was fired for converting to Christianity. As is usual, the government would not allow her to change her religion from Muslim to Christian formally on her I.D. card. As a result she tried to organize a public demonstration against the government with other Muslim converts to Christianity. Police quickly dispersed the demonstration and the demonstrators were beaten and threatened, including by the Muslim mob, which naturally got in on the action. The young daughter of one Christian convert had her arm broken but was denied medical attention.

Then in July 2010 it was revealed that state security had arrested Nagla and taken her to a government building in Cairo. There, as described earlier, a top official twisted the crucifix she was wearing, tightening the chain around her neck, while saying “the cross will be the death of you.” At one point after her release, she and her two young children were trapped indoors—their entire Muslim family having turned their backs on them—and besieged by a mob that banged on the doors and windows and cut off all electricity to the house, leaving Nagla and her children in the dark (one YouTube video shows a battered and bruised Nagla singing a psalm with her children while trapped in her home).⁶⁸

To give all this the Islamic seal of approval, a Muslim cleric, Salim Abdul Galil, appeared on an Al Azhar affiliated station proclaiming Nagla an “infidel,” adding she must either return to Islam or spend the remainder of her life indoors. As mentioned earlier, this pronouncement accords very well with Sharia law, especially the Hanafi school, which has strong roots in Egypt: rather than kill apostate women outright, the “lenient” Hanafis recommend that females be beaten and then

permanently imprisoned in their homes until such time as they see the “error of their ways” and resubmit themselves to Islam.⁶⁹

As Egypt continues its descent into Sharia, hardline clerics are becoming even more emboldened. In June 2012, on a popular Egyptian show, Sheikh Yassir Burhami, a leading figure among Salafis, unabashedly proclaimed,

Is it the right of the Muslim to convert to Christianity or another religion? Of course this is not a right! This is a matter that Sharia has clearly addressed, according to the agreed upon hadiths [including Muhammad’s statement “He who changes his religion [Islam] must be killed”]. It is impermissible, for any reason, for a Muslim to leave the community. Of course, you cannot force the infidel to enter into Islam [Koran 2:256]—but you must force the apostate. It is impossible to let the apostate remain in [a state of] apostasy, calling it a form of “freedom.”⁷⁰

Recent attacks on Muslim apostates to Christianity from one end of the Islamic world to the other—from Afghanistan to Zanzibar—all evince the same patterns documented in the above examples from Iran, Somalia, and Egypt. All demonstrate the unwavering persistence of Muslims—regardless of their nationality, race, ethnicity, language, or culture—in persecuting apostates to Christianity.

Afghanistan

In late 2010, Said Musa, an amputee and the father of six young children, was one of dozens of Afghans arrested after a Christian worship meeting was videotaped and exposed. A former Muslim who had converted to Christianity eight years before, Musa was charged with apostasy and pressured to renounce Christianity on television, but he continued to say he was Christian. He was imprisoned, suffering “sexual abuse, beatings, mockery, and sleep deprivation because of his faith.”

On November 27, he appeared shackled before a judge. No Afghan authority would defend him. The deputy secretary of the Afghan parliament, Abdul Sattar Khawasi, said that “those Afghans that appeared on this video film should be executed in public.”⁷¹ Then in late February 2011, after “intense diplomatic pressure,” Musa was released and fled Afghanistan. Of course, many other nameless and faceless Christians still languish in Afghan prisons for apostatizing to Christianity.⁷²

Bangladesh

In April 2012, “Vincent,” a former Muslim prayer leader in Bangladesh who had converted to Christianity, was “welcomed by threats and violence” from members of his former Muslim community, who “beat him almost to death,” causing him to be hospitalized for almost two months. According to *AsiaNews*, “the same Muslims who followed him and held him in high esteem when he was their imam now cannot accept his new ‘status.’”⁷³

Eritrea

An August 2011 *Worthy News* report tells of the plight of Eritrea’s apostates, who are “imprisoned for the testimony of Christ,” and sometimes tortured to death “for refusing to recant” Christianity—one such example being a forty-two-year-old man who died while in solitary confinement. “With these recent deaths, the confirmed number of Christians who died while imprisoned for their faith in Eritrea totals eight. At the same time, the government of President Isaias Afwerki has ramped-up its campaign against unregistered house churches, thereby earning Eritrea a slot on the U.S. State Department’s list of Countries of Concern as one the worst violators of religious freedom. . . . Church leaders in Eritrea told Open Doors that nearly 3,000 Christians were imprisoned by last December.”⁷⁴

India

In March 2012, Rekha Khatoon, a twenty-two-year-old Muslim woman in India, was attacked and kicked out of her home “for daring to give thanks for healing in Christ’s name.” Her own parents “helped Islamic extremists to beat her nearly unconscious.” According to the

young Christian convert, “I boldly told those who beat me up that I may leave my parents, but that I will not leave Jesus. . . . Jesus has healed me, and I cannot forget Him.”⁷⁵ Muslims also harassed and threatened the Christian woman who had “lured” Rekha to convert to Christianity.

In March 2011, Selina Bibi, once a Muslim, converted to Christianity—even as Muslims surrounded the Believers Church that she was being baptized in, disrupting the service and hurling anti-Christian insults.⁷⁶ Later, two Muslim women “summoned” Selina to their home, where the Christian convert was forcefully stripped naked and beat by a Muslim mob; more recent reports indicate that she continues to receive severe threats, including to burn her home down, if she does not return to Islam.⁷⁷

Kuwait

In January 2012, Kuwaiti Prince Abdullah al-Sabah boldly declared his conversion to Christianity, saying in an audio recording, “First of all, I fully agree with the distribution of this audio file and I now declare that if they kill me because of it, then I will appear before Jesus Christ and be with him for all eternity.”⁷⁸ The prince’s words make very clear that he, a native of Kuwait, is under no delusions as to the penalty for converting to Christianity.

Lebanon

In May 2012, the twenty-four-year-old daughter of a Lebanese Shiite cleric who was “physically and psychologically tortured by her father for converting to Christianity three years ago,” managed to escape and get baptized by a Christian priest—who was then abducted and interrogated about the whereabouts of the renegade woman. Muslim assailants also fired gunshots at the house of another priest and at a church. This “is part of an escalating pattern of violence against local Catholics,” said the region’s prelate.⁷⁹

Pakistan

In 2010, after Muhammad Kamran, a Muslim man, converted to Christianity and told his wife, she abused and exposed him, resulting in

his being severely beaten by local Muslims: “‘No one was willing to let me live the life I wanted [as a Christian]—they say Islam is not a religion of compulsion, but no one has been able to tell me why Muslims who don’t find satisfaction in the religion [such as myself] become liable to be killed,’” he said. Kamran eventually divorced, escaped, and remarried a Christian woman. In May 2012, it was reported that his family had again discovered his whereabouts and resumed threatening him. According to his new Christian wife, “Every other day, we receive threatening phone calls.... They are now asking him to abandon us and renounce Christianity, threatening that they will kill me and our child.”⁸⁰

The Philippines

In April 2012, in Mindanao, which has a significant Muslim population, Pastor Mario Acidre, a former Muslim who had converted to Christianity, was murdered in front of his wife in his home: “‘My husband staggered into our bedroom and I was shocked because he was full of blood,’ she recalled. ‘I brought him to the hospital right away. He was operated on for eight bullet wounds, but did not survive.’” The Philippines is a mostly Christian nation, but in the south, especially Mindanao, “Muslim fundamentalists are trying to build an Islamic state. Christians there face persecution and even death.” According to another pastor, “This incident triggered threats to other Muslims who converted to Christianity, and that is why the house churches closed down.”⁸¹ Also in April 2012, another pastor was shot in the head five times and killed “by two unknown gunmen in front of his teenage daughter.”⁸²

Saudi Arabia

In the summer of 2012, a twenty-eight-year-old Saudi woman, “Maryam” (or “Mary,” a pseudonym) embraced Christianity and fled the country, ultimately to Sweden. Earlier the woman had said that, though she “was raised to hate Judaism and Christianity she has come to love those religions since finding peace in Christianity.” Two men, a Christian Lebanese and a Muslim Saudi, are respectively accused of proselytizing to her and helping her escape. Prosecuting lawyer Humood al-Khaldi pointed out that the penalty for apostasy is death but also said

that “the roles played by the two men, the Saudi and Lebanese, in the woman’s apostasy, should be taken into consideration”—meaning they too must be punished for their roles. The *Saudi Gazette* reported that Swedish authorities were actually helping to find and extradite Maryam, the Christian fugitive, back to Saudi Arabia to face Sharia justice.⁸³ Considering that a few years earlier, as reported by *Gulf News*, a Saudi father cut out his daughter’s tongue and burned her alive for converting to Christianity, Maryam is sure to be treated brutally—if not murderously—if she is returned.⁸⁴

Sudan

In May 2010 in Khartoum, Sudan, Omar Hassan and Amouna Ahamdi, both twenty-seven, were attacked by masked and knife-wielding assailants after relatives learned that they had converted to Christianity. Amouna had earlier been stabbed by her brother three times in the stomach, seriously injuring her spleen, after she had confessed to having apostatized to Christianity. “‘We cannot deny Christ—this is a big challenge to us, because we do not have a place to go,’ she said, through tears: ‘We have no food, and we are jobless. I am still in pain, besides having a 2-month-old baby boy to care for.’”⁸⁵ In June 2012, a Muslim woman divorced her husband, Muhammad Khidir Khalil, a convert to Christianity, causing the court to automatically grant her custody of their two sons (according to Sharia, Muslim children of apostates are to be taken from the apostate parent). When the father tried to visit his children, his ex-wife threatened to notify authorities. “They might take the case to a prosecution court, which might lead to my sentencing to death according to Islamic apostasy law—but I am ready for this,” said the Christian man. “I want the world to know this. What crime have I done?”⁸⁶

Tanzania

In August 2012 Eva Abdullah, a seventeen-year-old Tanzanian girl who had converted from Islam to Christianity, was arrested and later sentenced to two years in prison for desecrating the Koran. She had converted to Christianity three years earlier, her parents had disowned her, and “a group of radicals” had tried to “persuade” her to renounce

her Christian faith. “When she refused, they falsely accused her of desecrating a Qur’an.”⁸⁷

Turkey

A February 2012 report from CBN News tells of Hussein, a twelve-year-old Turkish boy who converted to Christianity along with his family. The young boy decided to profess his Christian faith by wearing a silver cross necklace in school. As a result, Muslim classmates began spitting on him and beating him. When the boy threatened to report one of the bullies, the latter’s father threatened to kill him. His Islamic studies teacher beat him severely. As CBN reports,

Like in most Islamic countries, students of all faiths are required to attend Islamic studies in school. Those who refuse to recite the Koran and Islamic prayers are often beaten by the teacher. And so it was for Hussein. He said he was punished regularly with a two-foot long rod because he wouldn’t say the Islamic Shahada [Islam’s profession of faith]. . . . The teacher’s beatings, the bullying, and the assaults from classmates took a toll on young Hussein. Stressed and traumatized, he started to experience grand mal seizures. He now takes medicine to treat the condition. Hussein also attends a new school where he suffers fewer attacks. He insists he will never return to Islam even if he is forced to endure worse abuse. “Christ said, ‘You would suffer for me.’ So it’s okay to suffer and we should be happy to suffer for Him. The Lord is with me,” the boy said. Hussein said he will continue to tell others about Jesus, with or without that silver cross necklace.⁸⁸

Uganda

In January 2012, after announcing his conversion to Christianity, Hassan Sharif Lubenga, formerly a prominent member of an Islamic organization in Uganda, suffered the usual consequences. In his own words: “They [former colleagues] were furious. They then kidnapped me and blindfolded me for three days, coupled with beatings. They demanded

I deny Jesus as the Son of God, which I consented to because I feared that they were going to kill me.... The whole family and clan members were out to destroy me.” As a Muslim, he had had four wives; upon his conversion, one of them tried to poison him. His father committed suicide, leaving a note that read, “I have decided to kill myself because my son became a Christian,” and urging all family members to curse him. Hassan is currently in hiding: “All my family members have deserted me.... The Muslims are looking to kill me. I need protection and help.”⁸⁹

Around the same time, another Muslim convert to Christianity, Hassan Muwanguzi, experienced similar treatment. After he apostatized, his “family immediately kicked him out of their home, and enraged Muslims beat him. His wife left him that same year, and he lost his job as a teacher.” Undaunted, he recently opened a Christian school, Grace International Nursery and Primary School, in a predominantly Muslim region. “Incensed by his boldness,” an Islamic teacher filed a false charge that Muwanguzi had “defiled” his daughter, leading to Muwanguzi’s arrest. He was imprisoned for a time, but the accusation was discovered to be false, and he was eventually released, and fled.⁹⁰

Zanzibar

In January 2012, Musta Kim, a Muslim convert to Christianity, called police to his house after being robbed. When they discovered a Bible during their inspection, the course of inquiry immediately changed from ascertaining the identity of the thieves to asking why Musta “was practicing a forbidden faith.” He was imprisoned for eight months without trial. Since being released, his family has rejected him and at last report he was homeless and diseased.⁹¹

NO ESCAPE

Sometimes when Muslim converts to Christianity flee their countries of origin, their persecutors pursue them. This is especially the case when the apostate flees to a nation where there are Muslims aplenty. Christian converts seeking refuge in Kenya, for example, are being tracked and attacked by Muslims from their countries of origin, especially Somalia.

In December 2011 in Kenya, seven Muslims of Somali descent beat a young Somali Christian unconscious, seriously injuring his eye.⁹² During the attack, which occurred less than six weeks after a similar attack on his older brother, his assailants said, “We did not succeed in killing your brother, but today we are going to kill you.”⁹³ His family was presumably Muslim when he was born, so the gang beat him as an “apostate,” even though he was raised as a Christian. Also in Kenya, an Ethiopian was shot by his father, kidnapped, and almost killed upon converting to Christianity, according to the *Christian Post*.⁹⁴

In September 2012, a Somali Muslim apostate who fled to Kenya said, “Pastors and Christians are very afraid. I know people, mainly Christian converts, who had to leave their homes and their families because of pressures from these terrorists.” The threats that these fugitive apostates have received include “Stop your harmful ideologies and preaching to the Muslims” and other warnings—words that echo the subjugated status decreed for infidels by Koran 9:29:

Some Somali Muslims are already affected by this cancer of Christianity ... they will be under the sword of the mujahedeen [holy warriors].... We know where you are.... We ask Allah to help us make his purpose reign.... We are reaching millions of youth to join our jihad against the enemy of Islam and to terrorize by any means we can to make them understand that they are nothing but lowly infidels.⁹⁵

Even in South Africa, thousands of miles from its stronghold in the Horn of Africa, the Somali al-Shabaab was accused of systematically targeting and murdering fourteen Ethiopian Christians in August 2012. According to the local South African bishop, “‘If nothing is done, the Ethiopian population will be depleted.... [Those who were killed are] holy martyrs who have died because they are Christians.’ ... Meanwhile, Father Mike Williams of the Anglican Catholic Church also reveals members of his congregation have been targeted by gunmen with connections to Muslim extremists, saying, ‘In July [2012], we have lost seven members of our church.’”⁹⁶

Apostates to Christianity are under attack even in the West—including in the heartland of the United States. In June 2012, two formerly Muslim men in Saint Louis, Missouri, reported receiving death threats from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard for converting to Christianity and preaching it. One of the men had formerly served in the Revolutionary Guard and had even been assigned a suicide mission against Israel, before converting to Christianity and immigrating to the U.S. According to a KPLR 11 news report, "The two men believe that Islam is a religion that could easily radicalize a Muslim into a terrorist."⁹⁷ Also in Saint Louis, in October 2011, Muslims attacked an Iraqi Muslim convert to Christianity because he wrote a poem "which expresses pain over the loss of six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis." The attackers, who appeared to be Somalis, carved the Star of David on his back with a knife "while laughing as they recited his poem."⁹⁸ In October 2011, terrorists with suspected ties to Iranian security threatened to kill nearly a dozen evangelical Christians who had earlier fled Iran. They threatened that, unless the Christians repent, ask forgiveness, and return to Islam, they must die.⁹⁹

In Norway in August 2011, a Muslim convert to Christianity was tortured with boiling water while Muslims told him, "If you do not return to Islam, we will kill you."¹⁰⁰ Also in Norway, in January 2012, two Iranian converts to Christianity out for a walk were stabbed with knives by masked men shouting "infidels!" One of the men stabbed had converted to Christianity in Iran, been threatened there, and fled to Norway—thinking he could escape persecution in Western Europe, in one of the freest nations in the world.¹⁰¹

In Italy in December 2009, twenty-two-year-old Moroccan immigrant Said Boudira hanged himself after his Muslim family threatened and savagely beat him for his decision to convert to Christianity. He had previously tried to drown himself in the sea but had been rescued.¹⁰² Later, in January 2011, Karima El Mahroug, a Moroccan teenage nightclub dancer at the center of a prostitution probe, revealed how she was raped by her uncles as a child, and how, when she turned twelve and wanted to convert to Christianity, her father threw a pan of boiling oil over her, causing her to run away from home.¹⁰³

In the United Kingdom in June 2011, an Afghan man, Sher Ahmadzai, was sentenced to prison for hitting another Afghan Muslim who had converted to Christianity with a long plank of wood, knocking the apostate down as another man kicked him in the face.¹⁰⁴ And in Greece in May 2012, Abet Hasman, the deputy mayor of Patras who recently passed away, left a message to be revealed only in his obituary, that he, though born to Muslim parents in Jordan, was “secretly baptized an Orthodox Christian”—thus demonstrating how some Muslims who convert to Christianity, fully knowing the consequences of apostasy, opt for secrecy even in European countries.¹⁰⁵

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the lives of many Muslim converts to Christianity who do not get killed are still in many respects over, as they are regularly ostracized by family and treated like traitors by society. *Costly Call: Modern Day Stories of Muslims Who Found Jesus*, published in 2005, makes the extent of this phenomenon clear. This book contains twenty real-life stories, eighteen of which take place in Muslim-majority nations. According to the introduction, “each believer in Christ has made grave sacrifices for his or her faith,” including being “considered dead in the eyes of family. Some have lost jobs. Some have been imprisoned, threatened with execution, fined, and beaten relentlessly. Some were forced to flee their countries and live in exile.” Even after their initial ordeals, apostates to Christianity must often begin their lives again from scratch.¹⁰⁶

In December 2011, Abdul Rahman Muhammad Pouri, a convert to Christianity, told the ASSIST News Service of his experiences in Iran:

When my family and friends learned of my decision, they didn't accept it and rejected me as a result. They made me leave our family home. In addition, my friends treated me like my family had and began calling me an apostate and an infidel. In Iran, anyone who converts to Christianity faces various problems. In spite of the love I had for my family, I had to leave my home. Everyone rejected me.

Ironically, Islam's apostasy law was one thing that made him doubt Islam: "In my opinion, the violence and contradictions in Islam made it impossible for me to feel close to God. Because of this I replaced my traditional religion with Christianity."¹⁰⁷

The same month in Pakistan, a Muslim family discovered that their son, Malik Pauloos, had converted to Christianity. Not only did his father put up a notice in local newspapers disowning him, but also "his family would file a police complaint against him" saying that, by apostatizing, he had "blasphemed" Islam. Malik's response was that his family should "know that I had indeed become a Christian and would not renounce Christ even if they killed me," even as he fled and prepared to begin life anew.¹⁰⁸

DEATH TO BLASPHEMERS

Islam's blasphemy law is once again and with increasing regularity being invoked by malicious Muslims, as it was in former times, to punish, coerce, and get revenge against Christian minorities under Islam. Christians in those Muslim countries that enshrine the blasphemy law in their constitutions—Pakistan being the primary example—are especially being targeted.

Spotlight on Pakistan

Pakistan is one of the most dangerous countries in which to express—or simply be accused of expressing—anything other than praise and blessings for Islam's prophet. Pakistanis' extreme sensitivity to any potential insult to Muhammad is reflected in several laws in the nation's penal code, including Section 295-C: "Whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine."¹⁰⁹

Aside from the fact that countless people have been beaten, imprisoned, and tortured because of this law, in the last two decades at least

fifty-two people are known to have been murdered—usually by vigilante mobs—for transgressing it, according to the *International Herald Tribune*.¹¹⁰

Because non-Muslims—particularly Christians who by definition are known to reject Muhammad’s prophecy—are more likely to be suspected of blasphemy, and because the word of a Christian is not valid against the word of a Muslim in Sharia law, blasphemy accusations against Christians by Muslims routinely result in the imprisonment, beating, and sometimes death of the accused, even when there is no evidence that they did in fact say anything against Muhammad. This scenario has played itself out over and over again in Pakistan—despite the fact that, because of their social vulnerability (Christians reportedly make up less than 1 percent of the population in Pakistan) and susceptibility to the blasphemy charge, Pakistan’s Christians are probably much more careful than Muslims not to say anything that can be construed as “anti-Muhammad.”

As Amnesty International reported back in 1994,

Several dozen people have been charged with blasphemy in Pakistan over the last few years; *in all the cases known to Amnesty International, the charges of blasphemy appear to have been arbitrarily brought*, founded solely on the individuals’ minority religious beliefs.... The available evidence in all these cases suggests that charges were brought as a measure *to intimidate and punish members of minority religious communities ... hostility towards religious minority groups appeared in many cases to be compounded by personal enmity, professional or economic rivalry or a desire to gain political advantage*. As a consequence, Amnesty International has concluded that most of the individuals now facing charges of blasphemy, or convicted on such charges, *are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their real or imputed religious beliefs in violation of their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion*. [Emphasis added.]¹¹¹

The most notorious blasphemy case against a Christian in Pakistan in modern times illustrates Amnesty's point here. In November 2010, Asia Bibi, a married mother of five, was sentenced to death in accordance to Section 295-C for "defaming" the Muslim prophet Muhammad.

Back in June 2009 while working as a farm laborer, she had been told to fetch water. When Asia returned, some Muslim coworkers refused to drink the water, complaining that it was "unclean" because a Christian brought it. Arguments ensued. Moreover, there was already a feud between Asia and one of her Muslim neighbors concerning property damage. It was not long before her coworkers went and complained to a Muslim cleric, accusing Asia of making insulting statements about the Muslim prophet Muhammad. A mob stormed her home, severely beating Asia and her family, including children. She was later arrested and in November 2010 a Punjabi court fined her and sentenced her to death by hanging for insulting Muhammad.

Asia's case, like that of the Iranian pastor Nardkhani, was one of the rare cases actually to receive media coverage, resulting in international calls for her release—as well as threats from Pakistani Muslims that if she were released, they would take the (Sharia) law in their own hands and slaughter her. One mosque prayer leader has even offered \$6,000 to anyone who kills her.

Two of the most prominent advocates for Asia Bibi, Governor Salmaan Taseer and Minority Affairs Minister Shabaz Bhatti, were both murdered. Taseer was shot twenty-seven times by his own bodyguard as he exited his mother's home. The assassin cited as his motivation the fact that the governor was supportive of the Christian woman accused of blasphemy. As for Bhatti, a Christian, Muslims from al-Qaeda or the Taliban assassinated him for his outspoken position against Pakistan's blasphemy law and his support for Asia. His car was ambushed and sprayed with bullets. A letter left at the scene said that anyone who tried to tamper with Pakistan's blasphemy law would suffer the same fate.¹¹²

Bhatti, who received a large number of death threats, had predicted his own murder. In a prerecorded video released after his assassination

he said, "I believe in Jesus Christ who has given his own life for us ... and I am ready to die for a cause ... I'm living for my community ... and I will die to defend their rights."¹¹³ The investigation into his murder was so lax (a series of suspects were freed) as to suggest that the Pakistani government may have been involved in—or at least sympathetic to—the assassination of the anti-blasphemy law Christian.¹¹⁴

Because her case garnered so much attention and condemnation from the international community, Asia Bibi has not yet been executed. But she still languishes in jail, sick and isolated, and regularly beaten by both prison guards and Muslim inmates. In late 2011 it was reported that the female prison officer assigned to provide security for Asia beat her, "because of the Muslim officer's anti-Christian bias, while other staff members deployed for her security looked on in silence."¹¹⁵

While Asia Bibi's case is one of the most notorious examples of the abuse of Pakistani Christians under the accusation of blasphemy, there are countless other instances of the same phenomenon.

In March 2012 twenty-six-year-old Shamim Bibi, a Christian mother of a newborn baby, was arrested after neighbors accused her of "uttering remarks against Muhammad." A few days earlier, some of her relatives who had converted to Islam pressured her to do likewise, but she had refused, "telling them that she was satisfied with Christianity and did not want to convert."¹¹⁶ Shamim was arrested for blasphemy soon thereafter. According to her husband Bashir, the accusation is completely baseless: "I was present with her at the time of the alleged incident ... nothing of the sort happened. The Muslims cooked up a false story, though it's still not clear who provoked them into leveling this accusation." Other witnesses concur. After visiting her in jail, her husband said that Shamim "was holding fast to her Christian faith and firmly believed that God would rescue her soon from the false charge," adding that "She is alright otherwise, but she especially misses her daughter..."¹¹⁷

In February 2012, Muslims targeted Saira Khokhar, a Christian teacher, on the baseless allegation that she had burned a Koran. A mob stormed her school, which is run by City Foundation, a Christian NGO, and seized her, but local police intervened and took her into custody.¹¹⁸

In June 2011, Dildar Masih, a twenty-seven-year-old married Christian father of two, was arrested and charged with “blasphemy” after he rescued his eight-year-old nephew, known as Sunny, from a beating at the hands of Muslim youths who were trying to force him to convert to Islam by making him recite the *shehada*. “Seeing the attack from a distance, Masih shouted and rushed to the scene, rescued his nephew and then went to his work as a painter. Soon after the incident, a Muslim mob of about 55 led by the village prayer leader besieged Masih’s house,” insisting that “the blasphemer” be turned over to them and shouting other Islamic slogans. According to Masih’s elderly father, who witnessed the attack, “They pounced on him like tigers.... They slapped him, kicked him, and my poor son didn’t even know why he was being tortured.” He was arrested but eventually released from prison after being threatened and harassed by Muslim inmates and jail officials.¹¹⁹

In June 2012 an Islamic group attempted to burn down a Christian village after accusing a mentally retarded Christian, Ramzan Masih, of blasphemy. In the words of a villager, “These people [Muslims] do not let us live. We are poor but are working hard to survive. On the night of the incident a mob of Muslim clerics gathered [around] our colony to burn us all because of the Blapshemy [*sic*] Ramzan [was said to have] committed. Everyone was very scared. We all have small children in our houses and we didn’t know what to do. The mob surrounded our colony and raised a slogan to burn all the houses; they had torches in their hands and petrol in the cans. We called police and thank God police arrived just in time.”¹²⁰

In May 2012, a twenty-year-old Christian man, Sajid Inayat, was arrested and charged with “blasphemy” after vengeful Muslims accused him of burning a Koran after they lost a billiard game. The Muslims kept taunting and threatening him, and the Christian “dared them to do whatever they wanted and walked away.” Days later came the accusation and arrest, which caused Muslim riots, spreading “panic among Christians.” As a result, “several people left their houses anticipating violence.”¹²¹

In August 2012, a Pakistani flag—which has the name of “Allah” on it—flew from a Christian’s property to a Muslim’s, and the latter

accused the former of deliberately trying to blaspheme the name of Allah. This accusation was publicized in local mosques, prompting enraged Muslims to threaten to burn the homes of the Christian families in the area.¹²²

In December 2011, after a quarrel about the rent, a Muslim landlord accused his Christian tenant, twenty-five-year-old Khuram Masih, of desecrating the Koran. The accusation led crowds of Muslims to surround the Christian's home, making threats and hurling anti-Christian slogans. Muslim leaders from several mosques made loud announcements calling for "severe punishment." Accordingly, Khuram was arrested and charged under Pakistan's blasphemy laws.¹²³

In September 2011, Faryal Tauseef Bhatti, a Christian student in eighth grade, was expelled from school because she misspelled an Urdu word in a way that apparently changed its meaning from praise to disparagement of Muhammad, "leading to accusations of 'blasphemy.'" After the teacher severely beat her, the principal was notified and local Muslims demonstrated, "demanding registration of a criminal case against the eighth-grader and her eviction from the area." As riots and violence were about to erupt, the military intervened: "They bundled the family in an ambulance and took them away...."¹²⁴

In September 2011, "Javed Masih," a Christian high school teacher, "suffered false accusations of blasphemy by a student and some Muslim professors, because of dislike, revenge and hatred towards Christians." He was forced to leave his job; he appealed to court, but the judge simply suggested he "leave the country." A married father of three, he has been uprooted and is in hiding.¹²⁵

Also in September 2011, Aslam Masih, a thirty-year-old Christian man who had been accused of blasphemy and subsequently imprisoned, died in his cell from "'a treatable disease' after officials denied him proper medical care."¹²⁶ While in prison, he and others "accused of blasphemy, were kept in solitary confinement without access to a toilet, water or electricity."¹²⁷ The case against Aslam was at one point dropped because of a lack of evidence but reinstated as a result of pressure exerted by Islamic fanatics.

In March 2011, Qamar David, a Christian serving a life sentence on accusations that he had sent text messages blaspheming the prophet of Islam, died amid suspicions that he was murdered. The Christian had expressed fears for his life several times during the trial. “David did not die of a heart attack as the jail officials are claiming,” said his former lawyer. “He was being threatened ever since the trial began, and he had also submitted a written application with the jail authorities for provision of security, but no step was taken in this regard.” Conflicting versions of his death from jail officials have also raised doubts.¹²⁸

In May 2011, hundreds of Muslims “attacked Christians’ homes, a school and a Presbyterian church building after learning” that a Christian father and son who had earlier been accused of “blasphemy”—under the absurd allegation that they had disseminated a letter commanding Muslims to convert to Christianity—had been released from jail. (A handwriting expert concluded that they had not written the threatening note to Muslims.) Soon thereafter, mosques began blasting on the megaphones that the men had burned pages of the Koran, further exacerbating the riots and causing many Christians to flee the region.¹²⁹

In February 2011, following a property dispute with Muslim neighbors, Agnes Nuggo, a fifty-year-old Christian woman, was accused by the same neighbors of insulting Islam and subsequently arrested. As in so many other cases, she insists that the accusations against her concerning insulting Islam are fabricated.¹³⁰

In November 2010, twenty-two-year-old Latif Masih, a Christian, was shot dead by “two Muslim extremists” near his home after he was released on bail from jail, where he had served a five-month sentence for allegedly desecrating the Koran.¹³¹

In October 2012, a sixteen-year-old boy, Ryan Stanten, was arrested on “charges of blasphemy, terrorism, and cybercrimes,” because he forwarded text messages to his friends that were intercepted and deemed blasphemous by Muslims. A “furious Muslim mob” attacked the boy’s home, setting furniture on fire and shouting “Death to Blasphemer” and “Kill Christian Infidels.” Other Christians in the region fled.¹³²

Spotlight on Egypt

If Pakistan is the Muslim nation par excellence when it comes to persecuting Christians in the context (or pretext) of blasphemy, Egypt has been rivaling its Asian counterpart since the “Arab Spring.” With the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak and the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis—many of whom were previously in Egypt’s jails, including President Morsi—Egypt’s Christians have been experiencing persecution unprecedented in modern times, including for “blasphemy.”

Article 98(f) of Egypt’s current penal code states,

Confinement for a period of not less than six months and not exceeding five years ... shall be the penalty inflicted on whoever makes use of religion in propagating, either by words, in writing, or in any other means, extreme ideas for the purpose of inciting strife, ridiculing or insulting a heavenly religion or a sect following it, or damaging national unity.¹³³

If this law were interpreted equitably, it would penalize Egypt’s many Muslim clerics and preachers who regularly use religion to incite violence against the nation’s Christian minority, thus damaging national unity. But just as in Pakistan, it is almost exclusively Christians who are targeted for prosecution. Under the new constitution introduced by the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of Egypt, Christians are likely to suffer even more draconian punishments for insulting Muhammad. The following incidents are all from the period since the “January 25 Revolution.”¹³⁴

In November 2012 an Egyptian court decreed that eight Christians living in America—seven native Egyptians, and one American, Pastor Terry Jones—be sent to Egypt to be executed in connection with the sixteen-minute YouTube video about Muhammad, “Innocence of Muslims.” The prosecution offered no real evidence against the Christians, most of whom deny any involvement with the video, but instead relied on inciting Muslims against the accused by playing the video in the courtroom.

In September 2012 twenty-seven-year-old Christian Albert Saber was accused of posting clips of the Muhammad movie—which he had

downloaded from a Muslim site, not YouTube. Muslims attacked and evicted him and his mother from their home. Later Albert was arrested; he is currently incarcerated awaiting a likely multi-year sentence.

In March 2012, Makram Diab, a 49-year-old Christian man, was sentenced to six years in prison for “insulting Muhammad.” He had gotten into a religious argument with a Muslim colleague, who went on to protest that Diab had offended Muhammad. The Christian was subsequently arrested and sentenced to six years in a ten-minute mockery of a trial where Diab was not even allowed proper representation. Though “defamation of religion” is currently a misdemeanor under Egyptian law, punishable by a prison sentence of one month to three years, the judge doubled the sentence to appease protesting Muslims—including an angry mob, 2,500 strong, which had surrounded the courtroom Diab was in, demanding his death.¹³⁵

In August 2012, Bishoy Kamil, a Christian in his twenties who worked as a teacher, was arrested and given six years in prison for posting cartoons deemed insulting to Islam and its prophet on Facebook. He admitted to managing the page in question, but said it had been hacked. Like Makram Diab, he was given more than double the maximum penalty to appease a mob calling for his death.¹³⁶

In April 2012, Gamal Abdu Massud, a teenage Christian student, was sentenced to three years on accusations that he had posted a Muhammad cartoon on his Facebook account, which had only some 135 friends. Apparently the wrong “friend” saw it, for it was not long before local Muslims rioted, burning the Christian teenager’s house as well as the homes of five other Christians. Massud was subsequently arrested and tried and is currently serving his sentence.

In June 2011, Naima Wahib Habil, newly hired as director of a junior high school for girls, was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment on the accusation that she had torn a copy of the Koran in front of her students. The story had inspired mob riots and calls for her death.¹³⁷

In July 2011, Muslims rioted demanding the death of Coptic business tycoon Naguib Sawiris because he had posted a picture of Mickey and Minnie Mouse dressed in Salafi attire on his Facebook account. Due to

his high profile, he was acquitted in an Egyptian court—but not after Islamic media stations had thoroughly demonized him to the point that he has since left Egypt for Europe.

Magdi Khalil of Coptic Solidarity, an organization devoted to helping Egypt's oppressed Christians claim their human rights, has accused prosecutors in these cases of relying "exclusively on circumstantial evidence. And the judges do not behave like impartial judges, but rather as demagogues haranguing an already frenzied mob, and then sacrificing the Copts to satisfy them. Nor do they allow any representation for the accused. Judges just show up and pass their verdicts in very brief mock trials." Khalil confirms that "Egypt is rapidly turning into another Pakistan," adding that, "even those Christians who manage to avoid prison, their lives are often ruined, they have to flee their homes and villages, they lose their jobs and find it hard to get a new one."

Pakistan and now Egypt are the Muslim countries where Christians are most at risk of blasphemy prosecutions, but examples abound from across the Muslim world. To show how widespread this phenomenon is and how it crosses racial and national boundaries, the following are three cases from three very different regions—Far East Asia, the Horn of Africa, and the Arab world.

Indonesia

In February 2011 over a thousand rioting Muslims stormed an Indonesian courthouse because a Christian, Antonius Richmond Bawengen, had received what they deemed to be too lenient a sentence for blasphemy—the maximum five years. They attacked the judges, prosecutors, and, of course, the defendant—injuring nine people, including a missionary priest. The mob also attacked two churches and a Christian school and set vehicles on fire. Bawengen was found guilty of "spread[ing] hatred about Islam" because he had distributed pamphlets that some Muslims deemed offensive to Islam and Muhammad.¹³⁸

Ethiopia

In May 2011, a recently widowed Christian man in Ethiopia was accused of “desecrating the Koran” and forced to spend two years in prison, where he was abused, pressured to convert to Islam, and left partially paralyzed. On returning home, he discovered that his two young children had been abducted by local Muslims: “My life is ruined—I have lost my house, my children, my health. I am now homeless, and I am limping.”¹³⁹

Tunisia

In Tunisia, the “moderate” Muslim country where the “Arab Spring” began, one of the first things Ennahada, the new ruling Islamist party, did in August 2012 after winning elections was to file a bill to criminalize offenses against “sacred values,” including prison terms and fines for broadly worded offenses such as insulting or mocking the “sanctity of religion,” including “insults, profanity, derision and representation of Allah and Mohammed.”¹⁴⁰

SILENCING THE GOSPEL

Although Islam’s anti-proselytism law regularly oppresses Christians indigenous to the Islamic world, it has also—since St. Francis in the thirteenth century, as we have seen—oppressed Western Christians who try to talk to Muslims about the Gospel. Recently, for example, in December 2012 in Pakistan, Birgitta Almby, a seventy-year-old Bible school teacher from Sweden, was shot by two men in front of her home and died soon thereafter. She had served in Pakistan for thirty-eight years. Police said they could not find the assassins and could not unearth a motive, though Christians close to her have no doubt “Islamic extremists” murdered the elderly woman: “Who else would want to murder someone as apolitical and harmless as Almby, who had dedicated her life to serving humanity?”¹⁴¹ Her assassination fits a familiar pattern. In one month alone, March 2012, two American Christians were murdered in Iraq and in Yemen in the context of proselytism.

Spotlight on American Christians

On March 1, 2012, Jeremiah Small, a “beloved teacher and friend” who taught at a Christian school “in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah, in Iraq’s most peaceful region,” was shot to death by an eighteen-year-old student, even “as he bent his head to pray at the start of a morning class. The 33-year-old teacher from Washington State took bullets to the head and chest and died at the scene.”¹⁴² According to students, “Mr. Jeremiah’s hands were still folded in prayer when he fell.” According to *World* magazine, the day before the shooting “a heated discussion” had broken out between Small and one of his students, “during which the pupil threatened to kill the teacher because of conflicting religious views.”¹⁴³

While the *Wall Street Journal* called the source of the quarrel a “mystery,”¹⁴⁴ CBS reported that Small “was a devout Christian who frequently praised Christianity and prayed in the classroom, and his friends in Washington said his evangelism is what motivated him to teach in Iraq.” A pastor who once interviewed Small says, “He knew he was putting his life on the line.... He felt this was a way to serve and touch some lives for God.” His parents wrote on Facebook, “Our oldest, Jeremiah was martyred in Kurdistan this a.m.”¹⁴⁵ And the Muslim father of the pupil who killed Small portrayed Christians such as the slain American teacher as “more dangerous than al-Qaeda.”¹⁴⁶

On March 18, 2012, just a few days after Jeremiah Small’s murder, Joel Shrum, a twenty-nine-year-old American teacher living in Yemen with his wife and two children, was shot eight times and killed by gunmen and members of the al-Qaeda-linked Supporters of Sharia. The group later issued a message saying, “This operation comes as a response to the campaign of Christian proselytizing that the West has launched against Muslims,” calling the teacher “one of the biggest American proselytizers.” Although his employers issued a statement insisting that Shrum would never do such a thing as talk about Christianity around Yemen’s Muslims, Shrum’s wife indicated in an interview that Shrum was an open Christian, likely to share his faith. There is no reason to doubt his Islamic murderers when they say he was targeted for “proselytizing.” There are other Westerners in Yemen. If supporters of Sharia were simply targeting American infidels in general, there would be more random killings.

Not all Americans talking about Christianity in the Muslim world are murdered; some manage to get away after a sound thrashing. For example, in Indonesia in October 2011 an American family was attacked by a Muslim mob that set fire to their property and vehicle after they were accused of proselytizing Muslims. “Only the intervention of police saved the lives” of David Ray Graeff, his wife Georgia, and their two sons Benjamin and Daniel, from “an enraged mob spurred by a local religious leader.”¹⁴⁷ Right around the same time, angry Muslims and Indonesian authorities expelled Christians from their Protestant church and shut it down for allegedly engaging in proselytizing in “a predominantly Muslim area.” As in previous cases when churches were seized, “the fundamentalists were aided and abetted by the local administration.”¹⁴⁸

Likewise, in Bangladesh in February 2012, according to the *New York Post*, three American Christians were injured after their car was attacked by a Muslim mob that suspected they were converting Muslims into Christians. At least two hundred irate locals chased the missionaries’ car and threw stones at it, cutting the Americans with the broken shards of glass.¹⁴⁹

Still, the bulk of persecution for sharing the Gospel in the Islamic world is reserved for indigenous Christians, simply because there are many more of them than foreign Christians. Examples from all corners of the Islamic world follow.

Afghanistan

According to a September 2012 report by ASSIST News Service, “Christian evangelism [in Afghanistan] has turned into a sensitive and complicated issue in the last 10 years. Muslims target Christians every day. They use the Islamic Sharia Law to charge Christians with blasphemy. The rate of growth of Christianity in Afghanistan has caused Afghani Muslim clerics to consider it a threat.”¹⁵⁰

In July 2007, the Taliban abducted twenty-three South Korean Christian missionaries, executed two men, and later released the rest, after

South Korea “agreed to end all missionary work in Afghanistan. . . .”¹⁵¹ In September 2008, Amin Mousavi was arrested for “allegedly promoting Christianity” and sentenced to death, although he was later released and fled the nation. And the Taliban, although ousted of power by then, killed several converts to Christianity in a spree in 2004: “A group of Taliban dragged out Mullah Assad Ullah and slit his throat with a knife because he was propagating Christianity.”¹⁵²

Algeria

In March 2006 the Algerian parliament approved a new law that requires a prison sentence of two to five years plus a heavy fine for anyone “trying to call on a Muslim to embrace another religion” or anyone who “stores or circulates publications or audio-visual or other means aiming at destabilizing attachment to Islam.”¹⁵³ In May 2011, Karim Siaghi received the maximum five-year prison sentence and the maximum fine on the accusation that he had shared a Christian CD with a Muslim and blasphemed the prophet. In November 2011, during Siaghi’s appeal hearing, more evidence emerged. The Muslim merchant who brought the accusations against him had earlier initiated a conversation on religion with him: “Unhappy with Siaghi’s non-Muslim answers, the merchant tried to force him to pay homage to the Prophet and to recite the Muslim *shahada*: ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet.’ When Siaghi refused and said he was a Christian, the merchant filed a complaint that the convert had belittled the Prophet, and in the absence of further witnesses, charges were brought against him. The merchant was said to have seen Siaghi give a CD to someone, but never appeared in court to testify to that effect.”¹⁵⁴

Bangladesh

In February 2011, Biplob Marandi, a twenty-five-year-old Christian man in Bangladesh, was sentenced to one year in prison for distributing Christian books and other literature near a major Muslim gathering. “Duty police found Marandi creating chaos as he was propagating his religion, Christianity, by distributing the tracts as a mobile court on Jan. 21 was patrolling near the field of the *Bishwa Ijtema*,” the verdict reads.

Christian leaders and those close to Marandi counter by saying that local Muslims instigated the “chaos” because they deemed his literature un-Islamic.¹⁵⁵

Egypt

In June 2012, a Christian student reportedly handing out Christian literature at Egypt’s Asyut University “raised the ire of Muslim students,” resulting in violent clashes that left many on campus injured—all amid shouts of sectarian chants, no doubt including “Allahu Akbar!”¹⁵⁶ In September 2012, the U.S. embassy in Cairo issued a press release saying it had “credible information suggesting terrorist interest in targeting U.S. female missionaries in Egypt. Accordingly, U.S. citizens should exercise vigilance.”¹⁵⁷

Ethiopia

In March 2011, after Evangelist Wako Hanake received threats “to stop converting Muslims to Christ,” “suspected Islamic extremists” burned down his home in Ethiopia. According to area Christians, “Hostility toward those spreading faiths different from Islam is a common occurrence in predominantly Muslim areas of Ethiopia and neighboring countries.” They added that they are often subject to “harassment and intimidation.”¹⁵⁸

Iran

In August 2011, Iranian officials launched a Bible-burning campaign, confiscating and destroying 6,500 Bibles. Many were burned in public,¹⁵⁹ and officials likened Iran’s tiny Christian minority to the “Taliban and ‘parasites’” for sharing the Gospel.¹⁶⁰ And as we have seen, in February 2012, in order to prevent Muslim Iranians from hearing or understanding the Gospel, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence ordered the last two officially registered churches holding Farsi-language Friday services in Tehran—Emmanuel Protestant Church and St. Peter’s Evangelical Church—to discontinue them. Such Friday services had attracted Muslims interested in Christianity since Friday is most Iranians’ day off: “Persecuted Christians and Churches in the Islamic Republic of Iran are

banned from preaching the Gospel to non-Christians, holding Persian language services, teaching and or distributing the Holy Bible.”¹⁶¹

Kashmir

In October 2011, a mufti summoned C. M. Khanna, a Christian pastor he accused of being “involved in converting young Muslim boys and girls to Christianity,” to his court, threatening, “This warrants action as per Islamic law. . . . I will take all necessary measures in exercise of the powers vested in me by Islamic shariat. . . . It is a matter of grave concern that Christian missionaries active here should be running an organized and integrated campaign to convert young Kashmiri Muslims to Christianity.”¹⁶² According to Khanna, the mufti had falsely accused him because he was “annoyed” with Khanna for failing to do him a personal favor and so concocted this story to be avenged on him.¹⁶³

Malaysia

In March 2011 Malaysian authorities detained thirty thousand copies of the New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs in the Malay language. This would not be the first time government authorities seized Malay-language Bibles. Bishop Ng Moon Hing, chairman of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), decried the action, saying that the CFM is “greatly disillusioned, fed-up and angered by the repeated detention of Bibles written in our national language. . . . It would appear as if the authorities are waging a continuous, surreptitious and systematic program against Christians in Malaysia to deny them access to the Bible in [Malay].”¹⁶⁴ An earlier consignment of 5,100 copies of the Good News Bible in Malay had also been detained in March 2009. As a condition of their release, authorities ordered the books be defaced with official stamps saying, “Bible is for use by Christians only.”¹⁶⁵ In August 2012, religious police raided a Methodist church because of “fears that Muslims were being converted.” A Facebook campaign created to support the raid and to “prevent apostasy” had attracted support from twenty-three thousand people.¹⁶⁶

The Maldives

On September 27, 2012, officials at the Malé Ibrahim Nasir International Airport in the Maldives seized eleven books about Christianity from Jathish Biswas, a Bangladeshi expatriate who had come to the Maldives via Sri Lanka. He was arrested, spent twenty-three days in jail, and was then deported. According to Biswas, “authorities treated me as if I wanted to destroy their nation by bringing in Christian books. They stripped me almost naked to see if I was carrying anything else. Customs and police officials would ask me question after question and deny me proper food.” An American Christian was also later arrested and deported for alleged links with Biswas.¹⁶⁷

Morocco

In 2010 it was reported that Jamaa Ait Bakrim—a native Moroccan who had converted to Christianity, put up a cross, and started talking about his faith with fellow Muslims—was serving a fifteen-year-sentence for “proselytizing.”¹⁶⁸ In the same year Moroccan Muslims posted on Facebook the names, faces, and addresses of people they described as “hyena evangelists,” who are trying to “shake the faith of Muslims” in Morocco—echoing the language used in the nation’s anti-proselytism law.¹⁶⁹

Nigeria

In January 2012, Boko Haram members set ablaze a Christian missionary home in Nigeria, Bethany Home, and destroyed property worth millions of naira. “Although no life was lost in the attack, occupants of the home, mostly orphans and the less-privileged were rendered homeless as a result of the attack.”¹⁷⁰

Pakistan and India

In August 2011, Muslims in India intercepted and held three Christian women as they were traveling to a Muslim widow’s home, possibly to share the Gospel with her. The mob threatened to “burn them alive if they continued worshipping Christ,” even as they “pushed them around

and verbally abused them for their faith in Christ,” following the teachings of Muhammad: “Do not initiate the Salam [peace greeting] to the Jews and Christians, and if you meet any of them in a road, force them to its narrowest alley.” They also abused the Muslim woman for inviting “infidels” to her home, threatening both her and the rest of “the villagers with the dire consequences they will face if they attend Christian meetings or talk to any one of them.”¹⁷¹ In November 2011, a Christian evangelist was shot dead by “an unidentified gunman in what his family believes was a radical Muslim group’s targeting of a Christian.” According to the man’s son, “We firmly believe that my father was killed because of his preaching of the Bible, because there is no other reason.”¹⁷² In August 2012, Pastor Kelvin, a married father of five, was kidnapped. He had begun to preach around Muslims, some of whom were “showing interest in Christianity.” Soon thereafter, the pastor began to receive threats. He subsequently disappeared, and his wife received a call threatening her not to go to police.¹⁷³

The Philippines

In December 2011 in Mindanao, where Muslims make up one-third of the population, a twenty-year-old Christian preschool learning center was threatened with closure under technicalities. Mindanao “has the highest incidence of persecuted Christians doing missionary work in the Philippines and it was also in this region where a suspected man lobbed a bomb grenade at visiting Christian missionaries ... priests and missionaries have also been kidnapped.”¹⁷⁴

Russia

Christian missionaries even in traditionally Christian countries are now under threat from the sword of Islam. In Russia, for example, in 2009, Father Daniil Sysoyev, a thirty-five-year-old Orthodox priest “known for promoting missionary work among Muslims,” was shot several times, including in the head, late one evening in his parish church and died soon afterwards. According to the *New York Times*, a Moscow Patriarchate official called the murdered priest a “‘talented missionary,’”

speculating that his work among Muslims, including Tatars, may have been the motive for the slaying.¹⁷⁵ In fact, soon thereafter, an Islamic militant organization based in Russia's North Caucasus claimed the killing in a statement: "One of our brothers ... expressed his desire to execute the damned Sysoyev."¹⁷⁶

Saudi Arabia

In January 2011, two Indian Christians, Yohan Nese, age thirty-one and Vasantha Sekhar Vara, twenty-eight, were arrested by religious police and incarcerated for attending an apartment prayer meeting and for "converting Muslims to Christianity.... Religious police interrogated and beat them to the point that they suffered injuries, according to sources.... Authorities asked them how many Christian groups and pastors there are in Saudi Arabia and Riyadh. The religious police also put pressure on them to convert to Islam." By phone, Vara said "If I have to die for my God, I will die for him here."¹⁷⁷ Likewise, Eyob Mussie, an Eritrean refugee and Muslim convert to Christianity, was arrested in February 2012 for talking to Muslims about Christianity. He was arrested for "preaching to Muslims, an offense that carries the death penalty in Saudi Arabia."¹⁷⁸ However, authorities apparently decided that sending him back to Eritrea—where some three thousand Christians are in prison without charges, some isolated and tortured for years—was punishment enough.¹⁷⁹ And in late December 2012, religious police stormed a house in the province of al-Jouf, detaining more than forty-one guests for, in the words of the police statement, "plotting to celebrate Christmas."¹⁸⁰

Somalia

In September 2009, Omar Khalafe, a sixty-nine-year-old man who had been a Christian for forty-five years, was discovered with twenty-five Somali Bibles in his possession. He was shot dead and the Bibles placed on top of his body as a warning.¹⁸¹ Around the same time, a Muslim sheikh sent his wife to the home of Mariam Muhina, a woman suspected of speaking about Christianity. The sheikh instructed his wife to pretend

to be a potential convert to Christianity, who was interested in seeing the Bible. After it was discovered that Mariam did, in fact, have Bibles, she was murdered.¹⁸²

Sudan

In December 2012, two priests of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Sudan were arrested after a Muslim converted to Christianity. An al-Qaeda-affiliated group issued a statement threatening violence against Copts unless the woman who converted and was “kidnapped” by the Christians was returned—in another instance of Muslim projection of Islamic tactics onto Christians.¹⁸³ In May 2011, Sudanese National Security Intelligence and Security Service agents arrested Hawa Abdalla, a Christian woman in a Darfur camp for displaced people, accusing her of “possessing and distributing Bibles to others in the camp” and of “converting Muslims to Christianity.” Sources said she could also be tried for apostasy, “which carries the death sentence in Sudan.” Hawa was transferred to an unknown location in Khartoum, where sources said she would be tortured, as she had already been detained and tortured for six days in 2009 on similar charges.¹⁸⁴ In January 2012 authorities threatened to arrest church leaders if they engaged in “evangelistic activities” and failed to comply with an order for churches “to provide their names and contact information. . . . The order was aimed at oppressing Christians amid growing hostilities toward Christianity. . . . Sudanese law prohibits missionaries from evangelizing, and converting from Islam to another religion is punishable by imprisonment or death in Sudan, though previously such laws were not strictly enforced.”¹⁸⁵ Soon thereafter, two evangelists were arrested on spurious charges and beaten by police.¹⁸⁶

Turkey

In April 2007 in Turkey, several Muslims attacked a publishing house that distributed Bibles. They bound and stabbed three of its employees—Necati Aydin, Ugur Yuksel, and Tilmann Geske, two Turkish converts to Christianity and a German—and tortured them for several hours before murdering them by slitting their throats.¹⁸⁷ One unidentified suspect was

later quoted as saying: “We didn’t do this for ourselves, but for our religion [Islam]. . . . Our religion is being destroyed. Let this be a lesson to enemies of our religion.”¹⁸⁸ Evidence further indicates that an “undercover unit of the military” may have been involved in the massacre.¹⁸⁹

Turkmenistan

In September 2012 a Christian in Turkmenistan was reported as saying, “The situation has got markedly worse since July and we don’t know why.” Christian homes were raided and Bibles confiscated; Christians were threatened for not participating in Muslim prayers; they lost their jobs and businesses; Christian children were harassed and discriminated against in schools. In one instance, “secret police officers raided a flat where five elderly Christian women had gathered for worship, as was their regular practice. They were so frightened by the incident that they have stopped meeting together.”¹⁹⁰ In February 2012, Begjan Shirmedov, a seventy-year-old Christian man, was “detained and questioned by police for six hours as he tried to print copies of a small book of Christian poetry.” He was “forced to write a statement and banned from travelling outside his home region” while his case is under investigation.¹⁹¹

As with Islamic attacks on Christian worship, Islamic attacks on Christian freedom demonstrate remarkable continuity. Whenever and wherever there are Muslims—in “white,” “yellow,” “brown,” and “black” nations, from the seventh century to the twenty-first—there is intolerance for criticism of the Prophet and for attempts to persuade Muslims to leave Islam. Sharing the Gospel or questioning Muhammad is dangerous. Many Muslims have believed (and many still maintain) that apostates should be punished with death—or at least confined and beaten until they return to the Islamic fold. Some Muslims do not hesitate to act on that belief, and Christians have suffered the brunt. Thus Islam continues to demonstrate its incompatibility with freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and even freedom of belief.



PART FOUR

CLIMATE OF HATE

Islamic doctrines unequivocally create hostility toward Christians. As we have seen, Muslims around the world are quite deliberately enforcing the provisions of Sharia law against Christian worship, Christian evangelism, freedom of speech, and even freedom of conscience. But Christians also suffer violence at the hands of Muslims for reasons that go beyond *conscious* applications of Islamic doctrines. The hostility Sharia engenders toward Christians has permeated the culture, mentality, and worldview of the average Muslim. The extent to which violent hatred toward Christians animates an individual Muslim depends on many factors, of course. But clearly one of those factors—in many cases, the deciding factor—is how much or how little that particular Muslim is immersed in and influenced by Islamic civilization.

Marshall Hodgson, a scholar of Islam, discussed this phenomenon. He coined the term “Islamicate,” which refers “not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically

associated with Islam and the Muslims....”¹ Historian Daniel Pipes elaborates:

Sharia regulations were also at the heart of many Islamicate patterns....

In contrast to Islamic patterns [prayer, for example], which affect individuals, Islamicate patterns [for example the inferior social status of non-Muslims] affect communities. A person’s private faith determines the extent to which he follows Islamic regulations, but it is the whole society that is influenced by Islamicate patterns.²

Simply put, while “radical” Muslims *consciously* seek to uphold the letter of Sharia, the average Muslim *unconsciously* conforms to its cultural, social, and political manifestations. This should not be surprising. To see how the cultural aspects of a religion can become embedded into the social fabric of a civilization one need only look to Christianity and the influence it continues to exhibit even on the secular West—including on those who most disavow it. Tolerance, human rights, a desire for peace, and being the “nice guy”—all of those concepts championed by today’s leftists and liberals—did not develop in a civilizational vacuum, but rather from the singular teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, which over the course of some two thousand years have had a profound influence on Western epistemology, society, and culture, to the point that they are now simply taken for granted.

Accordingly, we should not be shocked if very different values pervade societies shaped by a very different religion, started by a very different founder. Consider the pervasiveness of anti-infidel sentiment in Muslim culture. Samuel M. Zwemer, author of the 1916 book *Law of Apostasy in Islam*, explains the origins of this sentiment in the context of apostasy:

The law of apostasy ... is not a dead letter. It is known to all Muslims from their youth up, if not in its detail of legal penalties, yet in its power of producing an attitude bitterly hostile

toward converts to Christianity. *What else could such a law produce except a fanatic attitude toward all who are not Muslims? The more Muhammadan a country or a community, the more does it despise the Christian.* [Emphasis added.]³

Generic hostility and contempt for the Christian in Muslim society is well documented. Consider the experiences of C. M. Doughty, a British writer who journeyed around Arabia and described his experiences in his *Travels in Arabia Deserta*. Bedouins told him, “Thou wast safe in thine own country, though mightest have continued there; but since thou art come into the land of the Moslemin [Muslims], God has delivered thee into our hands to die—so perish all the Nasara [Christians]! And be burned in hell with your father, Sheytan [Satan].” Doughty also records how Arabia’s Muslims would, while circumambulating around the Ka’ba, supplicate Allah to “curse and destroy” the Jews and Christians.⁴

Little has changed. To this day, as Muslims circumambulate around the Ka’ba in Mecca, typical supplications routinely blasted on megaphones and chanted to by Islam’s devotees include formulations such as these:

O Allah vanquish the unjust Christians and the criminal Jews, the unjust traitors; strike them with your wrath; make their lives hostage to misery; drape them with endless despair, unrelenting pain and unremitting ailment; fill their lives with sorrow and pain and end their lives in humiliation and oppression; inflict your tortures and punishments upon the unjust Christians and criminal Jews. This is our supplication, Allah; grant us our request!⁵

Or consider the words of an Ethiopian Christian—one of thirty-five arrested in Saudi Arabia in 2011 for holding a prayer meeting—who was imprisoned, abused, and released only months later: “We believe that we are released as the result of the pressure exerted by ICC [International

Christian Concern] and others. The Saudi officials do not tolerate any religions other than Islam. They consider non-Muslims unbelievers. *They are full of hatred towards non-Muslims* [emphasis added].”⁶ Some eight hundred years earlier, Marco Polo, that famous European adventurer who traveled throughout the East in the thirteenth century, made a similar observation concerning the Arabian Peninsula: “The inhabitants are all Saracens [Muslims], and *utterly detest the Christians* [emphasis added].”⁷

Nor is this hatred limited to “Wahhabi” Arabia or Taliban-controlled regions in Afghanistan. It prevails even in Muslim countries deemed “moderate.” Consider Tajikistan, a nation few would associate with radical Islam or anti-Christian sentiment: in January 2012, “a young man dressed as ‘Father Frost’—the Russian equivalent of Father Christmas—was stabbed to death” by a Muslim mob while visiting relatives and bringing gifts. While beating and stabbing him, the mob screamed, “‘You infidel!’” Police cited “religious hatred” as the motivation behind the killing.⁸

This sort of hatred transcends doctrine—the letter of the Sharia law—and has become embedded in the fabric of Muslim society. When, in August 2011, a Muslim mob brutally assaulted a group of Christians as they were watching a movie about Jesus, destroying the projector, they were not carrying out a fatwa, obeying any particular verse of the Koran, or applying any specific provision of Sharia. They were giving vent to a deep-rooted contempt for Christians that had been fostered by Islam in general.

Here we will survey expressions of Muslim anti-Christian hatred that, over the course of nearly 1,400 years, have come to permeate the collective consciousness of the Muslim world—regardless of the supposed divide between “radical Muslims” and “moderates.” Put differently, radicals tend to act out their anti-Christian animus violently and in planned acts of terrorism, while moderates enable violence against Christians or simply look the other way. As we investigate the phenomenon of anti-Christian hatred in the Muslim world, we will look at three familiar categories: Muslim government policy, Muslim mob mentality, and Islamic jihadi terrorism.

MUSLIM GOVERNMENTS: PLANTING AND NOURISHING SEEDS OF HATE

Muslim governments around the Islamic world enable anti-Christian sentiment throughout Muslim society in two primary ways: 1) allowing educational curricula that condemn and demonize Christians and other non-Muslims; and 2) rarely, if ever, legally siding with a Christian against a Muslim, thus emboldening the latter to continue committing injustices against the former.

Learning Hatred from Education

That anti-Christian teachings permeate the worldview of the average Muslim is ensured by the fact that, from childhood on up, Muslim students are regularly exposed to anti-Christian rhetoric in schools. By funding this kind of education, the governments of Muslim nations—including many deemed “moderate” “allies” of Western nations—are responsible for planting the first seeds of hate. This is not a new phenomenon. According to Arabist E. W. Lane, who traveled in Egypt in the 1820s, “children in Egypt are often taught, at school, a regular set of curses to denounce upon the persons and property of Christians, Jews, and all other unbelievers in the religion of Muhammad.”⁹

And while Christianity is openly disparaged in classrooms—even in the presence of Christian students, who must sit through it quietly—the study and sometimes even memorization of the Koran is mandatory, including for Christian students. My own father was educated in Egypt in the 1950s. Because he used to refuse to recite the Koran, he was frequently reprimanded, and twice beaten. In one instance, his religion teacher ground sand into his ear, while disparagingly calling him “Guirgus”—the Arabic version of “George,” a generic and derogatory appellation for Christians in Egypt. Soon thereafter my father abandoned Egypt for America.

This is a personal family anecdote, but evidence of far more graphic abuse across the Muslim world is overwhelming; it has only gotten worse over the decades. A product of Islamic indoctrination, such anti-Christian

hatred is inevitable and will only get worse as Muslims continue turning back to their Islamic heritage, turning back to the Islamic way.

In October 2012, the *Daily Beast* reported how the Saudi education system continues to indoctrinate children with hatred and incitement, especially against Christians and Jews, despite Saudi promises to reform their textbooks. For example, a ninth-grade textbook published by the Ministry of Education states, “The Jews and the Christians are enemies of the believers, and they cannot approve of Muslims.” An eighth-grade textbook says, “The Apes are the people of the Sabbath, the Jews; and the Swine are the infidels of the communion of Jesus, the Christians.”¹⁰ These are just two examples of a long list of hate-filled passages, which, of course, trace back to the Koran and hadith. This is one reason that Muslim governments have trouble getting such teachings out of their textbooks and school curricula. Islam’s clerics remind authorities that these are the teachings of Islam and that to suppress them is to suppress Islam—and to be declared apostate rulers.

Nor is such hate being promoted in Saudi schools alone. Thanks to Saudi oil wealth and the vast network of Sunni organizations sponsored by the Saudis, the literature and educational materials produced in Saudi Arabia travel far and wide, ending up in mosques, Muslim schools (*madrassas*), and libraries around the world—including in the West.

Back in 2002, Fox News posed the question, “Can it be true? That Islamic schools in the United States teach hatred towards American Christians and Jews?” Fox reported that “one such school outside Washington, D.C., uses textbooks teaching 11th graders that ‘the Day of Judgment can’t come until Jesus Christ returns to Earth, breaks the cross and converts everyone to Islam, and until Muslims start attacking Jews.’ ... Americans generally assume Islamic hate teaching resided ‘out there’—in Cairo or Riyadh. And yet it’s right here—in the elite Islamic Saudi Academy just outside Washington, D.C.”¹¹

If such Saudi-sponsored hate is being taught in Muslim schools a few miles away from the capital of the United States, how ubiquitous must it be in the Islamic world?

Consider Pakistan. A November 2011 report from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom demonstrates that Pakistani

school textbooks promote intolerance for Christians, Hindus, and all non-Muslims, and that most school teachers view non-Muslim minorities as “enemies of Islam”: “Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second-class citizens who have been granted limited rights and privileges by generous Pakistani Muslims, for which they should be grateful.”¹²

Another report, issued in April 2012 by the Catholic National Commission for Justice and Peace, details how Pakistani school textbooks “promote religious fanaticism, discriminate against minorities and trigger religious conflicts.” As in other Muslim countries, Christians and Hindus “are obliged to learn the basics of Islam”—studying the Koran is mandatory—while their own religions are openly denigrated. Even in subjects such as social science and linguistics, “about 20% of the content is linked to Islam.”¹³ Bonus points can be earned by anyone, including non-Muslims, who excel in Islamic studies, while Christians cannot earn extra points for excelling in their own religion.

This kind of educational abuse is also common in Turkey—which is still being touted as “secular” by the mainstream media and Western academics. In February 2012 the Turkish Association of Protestant Churches’ annual Report on Human Rights Violations noted, “Christians in Turkey continue to suffer attacks from private citizens, *discrimination by lower-level government officials and vilification in both school textbooks and news media* [emphasis added].” A “root of intolerance” prevails in Turkish society toward adherents of non-Islamic faiths: “The removal of this root of intolerance is an urgent problem that still awaits to be dealt with.”¹⁴

Despite promising to reform its school textbooks, Turkey’s Ministry of Education made no changes to a tenth-grade textbook that portrays the Assyrian Christians—the nation’s longest-established indigenous community—as traitors. Objections were raised back in 2011, and the Turks, like the Saudis, had issued a statement promising to revise the texts in the next printing, scheduled for 2012. Yet the books were reprinted in October 2012 without any improvements. “In fact, the negative and slanderous portrayal of Assyrians [Christians] has increased in the new edition,” decried one reviewer.¹⁵ “The book now not only

portrays Assyrians as traitors in the past but says the Assyrians continue their betrayal of Turkey today.” The Assyrian International News Agency pointed out that Turkey’s government still denies the Armenian genocide of Turkey’s Christian population and is in fact “not hesitant to distort historical events by inverting victim and perpetrator.”¹⁶

Ironically, instead of reforming its own textbooks to reflect objective history, the chairman of the Turkish parliament’s education committee engaged in projection, accusing the French government of “planting seeds of hate” for including the Armenian genocide in French history and geography school books.¹⁷ (Most objective historians agree that about 1.5 million Christian Armenians were systematically slaughtered during World War I in a deliberate policy of genocide ordered by the Ottoman government.)

The anecdotes above demonstrate the role of Muslim governments in inciting, or inculcating, anti-Christian sentiment. An Islamic cleric on an October 2012 episode of Al Hafiz TV, an Islamic satellite station, explained why Christian teachings must never be taught in Muslim classrooms, even to Christians: “they truly stab at the rulings of Islam,” that is, Christian teachings contradict Islamic teachings and thus must be suppressed. To exemplify, he read from a Christian text that said “the Christian religion does not differentiate between women and men, but it confirms their perfect equality: it gives them an equal share in inheritance, it bans divorce, and it bans polygamy.”

“Now,” said the sheikh, “if my son hears such things while he’s in school, he’ll come home and say to me, ‘Father, why do you have many wives? You are unjust—unlike Christianity which is full of justice!’” The cleric went on to complain that Christian teachings contradict “the religion of the prophet,” who of course had many wives—more than the Koran’s prescribed four; made divorce a simple matter for men; and decreed that females inherit only half of what males inherit. The cleric complained that Muslim men who try to exercise their Islamic rights—to polygamy, double-inheritance, and easy divorce (now via text messaging, as a recent fatwa allows)—become “criminals, and the religion [Islam] that taught them such things taught them crimes.” In short, “it is impermissible to produce texts that contradict the teachings of the

Koran”¹⁸—another echo of Islam’s ban on free speech and non-Muslim proselytism.

While negative depictions of non-Muslims proliferate in Islamic school textbooks, a whitewashed image of Islam predominates in Western education, particularly in the United States. According to a 2009 American Textbook Council report citing a number of popular textbooks used by American junior and senior high school students, “key subjects like jihad, Islamic law, [and] the status of women are whitewashed” because of political correctness, or out of fear of Muslim activists. Discussing the strikes of 9/11, one textbook never mentions Islamic ideology, referring to the nineteen al-Qaeda hijackers simply as “teams of terrorists”—this despite the fact that al-Qaeda has repeatedly articulated its distinctly Islamic worldview, with a stress on hating “Christian infidels” and waging jihad on them.

One seventh-grade American textbook offers wishful thinking in place of facts: “Jihad represents the human struggle to overcome difficulties and do things that are pleasing to God. Muslims strive to respond positively to personal difficulties as well as worldly challenges. For instance, they might work to be better people, reform society, or correct injustice.” Impressionable American students are unlikely to guess that “correcting injustice” could mean killing an apostate and “reforming society” could include subjugating Christian infidels—as is happening now under the “Arab Spring”—but that is exactly how many Muslims would understand jihad.

Even the primary sources of Islamic history, written by authoritative Muslim historians venerated throughout the Islamic world, make it absolutely clear that Islam conquered much of what is today called the “Muslim world”—including half of what then constituted the Christian world—by the sword; but the report finds that these facts are glossed over or distorted in American textbooks. Islam ambiguously “spread” or was “brought” to those areas. This is from the same textbooks that allot whole chapters to bemoaning the Crusades and portraying Christians as intolerant fanatics (ignoring the fact that the Crusades were in response to jihadi conquests of Christian lands and the centuries-long persecution of Christians).¹⁹

Learning Hatred from the Law

Another way that Muslim governments contribute to the hatred of Christians has to do with the justice systems in Muslim countries. Regardless of what is formally written about religious equality and citizenship in the constitutions of these nations, authorities will rarely if ever side with Christians vis-à-vis their Muslim persecutors. When it comes to Muslim-on-Christian violence, police habitually look the other way until Muslim culprits have done their damage and fled. This pattern is most obvious in cases when Muslims riot and destroy churches. It often takes police hours to arrive, and the perpetrators are rarely arrested—whereas the Christian victims often are. When Muslims rob, plunder, or annex the land of Christians, authorities ignore it, sometimes even warning the Christians not to complain. The police may not actively side with the mob, but they do not want to be in the awkward position of arresting and prosecuting fellow Muslims—which might make them appear un-Islamic, and thus worthy of the same treatment as Christians.

Muslim authorities have also sided with Muslim abusers in instances of Christian girls being abducted, raped, and forced to convert to Islam and “marry” their Islamic kidnappers. On those rare occasions when such rape victims escape back to their frantic families, police often seize them and return them to their Islamic rapist “husbands,” a scenario that is played over with great frequency, particularly in Pakistan.

Legal complicity in Muslim violence against Christians can be traced to the Islamic doctrine of “Loyalty and Enmity,” which commands Muslims always to side with fellow Muslims against non-Muslims. This doctrine is built atop Koranic verses such as 5:51, which warns believers against “taking the Jews and Christians as friends and allies ... whoever among you takes them for friends and allies, he is surely one of them,” that is, any friend of the Christians becomes himself an “infidel.” According to the classical and authoritative exegete al-Tabari, Koran 5:51 means that the Muslim who “allies with them [non-Muslims] and enables them against the believers, that same one is a member of their faith and community.”

One can easily see how this teaching compels Muslim authorities never to “ally” with and “enable” Christians against Muslims—

but rather to turn a blind eye to Muslim abuse of Christians. Similar scriptures include Koran 3:28, 4:89, 4:144, 5:54, 6:40, 9:23, and 58:22; the last simply states that true Muslims do not befriend non-Muslims—“even if they be their fathers, sons, brothers, or kin.” Likewise, according to Muhammad, “A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor humiliates him nor looks down upon him”²⁰—certainly not for the sake of the hated infidels, whatever their grievances.

Two stories, both from May 2012 in Egypt, illustrate how the “Loyalty and Enmity” doctrine plays out in practice. In a court verdict that was criticized by human rights organizations as “unbelievable” and “extremely harsh,” twelve Christians involved in a riot were convicted to life imprisonment while eight Muslims—including some who had participated in the torching of nearly sixty Christian homes—were acquitted, all to thunderous cries of “‘Allahu Akbar!’” in the courtroom.²¹ A different Muslim judge in Upper Egypt dismissed all charges against a group of Muslims who had accused a Christian man of having an affair with a Muslim woman, terrorized his family for over a year, and finally cut off his ear in a knife brawl while trying to force him to convert to Islam.²²

Spotlight on the Maspero Massacre

An especially egregious example of how Muslim governments exonerate Muslim persecutors of Christians, and also brutally punish those same Christians for standing up for their basic human rights, is Egypt’s Maspero Massacre, in which the military killed twenty-eight Christians and injured several hundred.

Days after the destruction of St. George Church in Edfu—which at the time was only the latest of several churches Muslim mobs had attacked and destroyed in Egypt—thousands of frustrated Christian Copts staged a protest in Maspero near Cairo on October 9. In response, the military—earlier hailed by the Western media for its patriotism and “gentleness” towards protesters calling for Mubarak’s ousting—brutally punished Egypt’s Christian citizens. Among other atrocities, Copts were chased and literally run over by armored vehicles; many gruesome images of flattened people were caught on tape. Death squads of snipers were

deployed atop buildings the night before the planned protest to kill and terrorize demonstrators.²³ Eyewitnesses, including Muslim bystanders, attested that they saw soldiers hurling the mutilated bodies of slain Christians into the Nile to cover up the evidence.²⁴

Anti-Christian animus clearly fueled this attack. Videos record soldiers screaming “Allahu Akbar!” (Islam’s primordial war cry) and cursing “infidels” as they approached and attacked Christian protesters. A soldier boasting that he shot a Christian in the chest is greeted with shouts of “Allahu Akbar!” from the crowd around him.²⁵

Christians were so hunted that some Muslims, in “Schindler’s List” fashion, even helped hide the Christians from the military. An Arabic report titled “Egypt’s Schindler” recounts the story, a splendid exception to the general rule of Muslim indifference to hate crimes against Christians. A Muslim owner of a company based in Maspero near the site of the Christian massacre had to struggle to get past the dead and wounded who filled the entrance of his company’s building. When he went up to his office, he saw the look of “horror on the terrified faces” of his employees and of some forty Copts, including a priest, who had sought shelter there. The staff told him how the military police, armed with machine guns, had broken into the company’s headquarters searching for Christians, who hid in the restrooms. Some Muslim employees in the company gave their ID cards to the Christians to hide their true identity from the military during the carnage.²⁶

Notwithstanding the overwhelming evidence of the atrocities, Egypt’s Military Council, ruling at the time, held a news conference after the massacre in which senior official Mahmoud Hegazy spun lie after lie. The military, he said, would “*never, never*” run over civilians. That very idea was “*impossible, impossible!* ... Shame on those who accuse the Egyptian military of such things! ... *Never* has our military run over a single person, not even when combating the Enemy [Israel].”²⁷

Hegazy portrayed the unarmed Christian protesters as aggressors who had attacked and killed “honorable” soldiers. To prove his point, he showed an image of a protester on top of a stalled armored vehicle throwing a rock at the soldier inside and a video of a military vehicle, which he claimed had been hijacked by a protester, driving wildly into

the Christian crowd. However, an investigative report on the Arabic-language program *Al Dalil*, which focuses on Islam and Christianity, including in current events, showed that the vehicles in both images had the same identification number. In other words, when the vehicle in which a soldier was chasing and running over protesters was finally stalled, the protesters then attacked it. Egypt's military willfully manipulated the footage to exonerate its brutality and demonize the Copts for trying to defend themselves.²⁸

Instead of trying the soldiers who intentionally ran over and opened fire on Egyptian citizens, Egypt's military prosecutor detained thirty-four Christians, including three teenagers under sixteen years old, on charges of "inciting violence, carrying arms and insulting the armed forces." Many of the detainees were not even at the scene but were simply collected from the streets for "'being a Christian.'" One Copt was arrested and accused of stealing a machine gun to kill fellow Copts.²⁹

Later in 2012, two Coptic priests, Father Matthias Nasr and Father Filopateer Gameel, were also forced to stand trial in connection with these events. Father Mathias commented, "I wonder about the conditions prevailing in Egypt now, whereby victims are being investigated, while the real perpetrators are ruling the country and continuing with their crimes against the Egyptian people and peaceful demonstrators everywhere.... We all saw who ran over the demonstrators and who shot at them, all Egyptians saw that on videos and photos."³⁰

On April 24, 2012, the panel of judges appointed by the Egyptian Minister of Justice to investigate the Maspero Massacre closed the case, citing "lack of identification of the culprits." Commenting on the panel's report, attorney Said Fayeze said that a biased judiciary had denied the rights of those killed: "We said all along that it was just a show and this is the outcome we got, but the families of the victims will never forsake the rights of their children."

The fiancée of one of the Copts flattened under an armored vehicle called the entire proceeding a "farce," adding that the Maspero case should have been taken to an international court—which is what Copts had called for from the beginning—"because in Egypt we are unable to get justice for those who were martyred." The sister of another Christian

protester who was fatally wounded by a sniper said she had expected such an outcome: “You can expect anything from whoever kills with such brutality. This case is being handled by the killer [the Egyptian state] and of course it would be impossible for the killer to condemn himself.”³¹

Meanwhile, Egyptian media incited hatred against Egypt’s Christians. Muslim clerics, including Dr. Burhami, the popular Salafi leader, blamed the massacre on the Christians themselves, arguing that St. George Church had been burned because it did not have a permit and calling down “Allah’s curse” on the Christians.³² Egyptian state TV had incited Muslims against Christians even as the Maspero Massacre was unfolding. Minutes after the military went on its rampage, one news anchor asserted that armed Christians were on the offensive, killing three soldiers, injuring twenty, and burning state property—all charges that were proven to be lies. Thus, even as armored vehicles were mowing down protesters, Egyptian TV broadcasted footage of reporters saying, “Help, the Copts are killing our heroic, patriotic soldiers and burning Korans!” One segment on Egyptian TV showed an outraged reporter condemning Christians for killing “our noble protectors [soldiers], who never once fired a single shot.” As a result of such incitement, many Muslims naturally took to the streets attacking Christians and their property.³³

Egyptian TV officials later confessed to fabricating the story of the killing of the three soldiers by Christians—but that did not stop a barrage of op-ed pieces blaming the Christians for their own massacre.³⁴ Indeed, because of Egyptian TV’s wanton lies, several Egyptian reporters and journalists later condemned the state TV station. Anchor Dina Rasmi said, “I am ashamed that I work at this despicable TV channel. . . . Egyptian TV was effectively calling for civil war between Muslims and Christians. . . . Egyptian TV has proven that it is a slave to those who rule.”³⁵ Another news anchor, Mahmoud Yousif, announced that he “washes his hands of what Egyptian TV is broadcasting.”³⁶

Even so, Egyptian TV’s lies were quickly picked up and disseminated by an uncritical Western mainstream media. The BBC’s initial headline on the massacre, for example, was “Egypt troops dead after Coptic church protest in Cairo.” The report’s opening sentence highlighted Christian protesters “clashing with security forces as army vehicles

burned outside the state TV building,” suggesting that the protesters were the aggressors. And according to an Agence France-Presse (AFP) report, “State television reported that three soldiers were shot dead and dozens of their comrades wounded as angry Copts wielding batons protested over the burning of a church in southern Egypt last month.”³⁷

The Western mainstream media, which had earlier extolled the Egyptian military as the “guardian” of the Tahrir Square revolution against Mubarak, praising it for not attacking or hurting Egyptian citizens, apparently could not believe that this same military would now engage in such brutalities against its own citizenry at Maspero, and so gullibly swallowed Egyptian state media’s distortions. The difference, of course, was that Maspero was an exclusively Christian protest. Despite any formal guarantees of religious equality for citizens on paper, Christians under Islam are increasingly seen as undesirables who should be thankful for being allowed to exist—and hence as ungrateful when they actually protest, standing up for their human rights.

The Maspero Massacre and the events surrounding it illustrated all the elements of institutionalized anti-Christian sentiment in Egypt, showing how the Islamic doctrine of “Loyalty [to Muslims] and Enmity [for Christians]” permeates Muslim society from top to bottom. First police looked the other way when a Muslim mob destroyed and burned several churches. Then, when frustrated Christians protested, calling for justice, the military slaughtered them in a particularly gruesome way. Egypt’s rulers and media—in accordance with the Muslim prophet’s logic that “war is deceit”—tried to deceive the world by portraying the victims as the aggressors. And finally, the judiciary punished no Muslims, including none of the soldiers who intentionally drove armored vehicles over Christians—even as Christians, the victims, were harassed and imprisoned.

MUSLIM MOB MENTALITY

Muslim governments encourage hatred of Christians with anti-Christian education and impunity for Muslims who act on that hatred.

The Muslim mob is representative of those Muslims who often know little about Sharia, who are not necessarily observant, but who nonetheless—thanks to the education they received and the culture they imbibe—are hostile to Christians. They know one thing: Muslims are superior to Christians. This sense of supremacy manifests itself in various ways, from a tendency to extreme outrage and violence in response to the smallest slight, to “altruistically” forcing Christians to convert to Islam, to treating Christian women as objects of sexual gratification to be used and discarded at will.

Collective Punishment

One of the most “natural” forms of Christian persecution under Islam, one apparently embedded in the Muslim psyche, is collective punishment. If any Christian for any reason grieves any Muslim, the nearest most accessible Christians must bear the brunt. Such collective punishment of Christians takes on many forms—from punishing the immediate family members of an offending Christian to punishing local Christians for offenses committed by (or imagined to have been committed by) Western nations, which Muslims tend to conflate with Christianity.

Collective punishment is largely a cultural impulse rather than a legal principle—the mob is often unfamiliar with the particulars of Sharia law—but it certainly has parallels in Islamic doctrines, stretching back to *The Conditions of Omar*. After agreeing to a number of debilitations in order to be allowed to exist under Islamic rule, Christians had to vouchsafe for one another’s behavior: “We guarantee all this to you upon ourselves, our descendants, our spouses, and our neighbors.” If any Christian broke any of the *Conditions*, the pact became null and void, and all Christians became, once again, targets of the jihad—that is, subject to enslavement, rape, plunder, and death: “if we change or contradict these conditions imposed upon ourselves in order to receive safety, we forfeit our dhimma [covenant], and we become liable to the same treatment you inflict upon the people who resist and cause sedition.”

Islam’s authorities have been unambiguous about the consequences if even one or some Christians defy the conditions. The Yemeni jurist al-Murtada, for example, stated, “The agreement will be canceled if all

or some of them break it.” At the other end of the Arab world, the Moroccan jurist al-Maghili taught that “the fact that one individual (or one group) among them has broken the statute is enough to invalidate it for all of them.”³⁸

This principle applies to all non-Muslim groups —Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and so forth—living in Muslim countries. Yet collective punishment falls on Christians in the overwhelming majority of cases, mostly for two reasons. First, unlike other religious groups, which exist only in a limited number of Muslim countries (Hindus in Pakistan, animists in Sudan), Christians are the “common denominator” infidels present in every Muslim country. Also, most Muslims see the hated West as “Christian,” so any time Western nations or Western culture offends Muslims—whether by military actions, offensive cartoons, YouTube videos, or papal speeches—Christians in Muslim countries are punished in retaliation.

Egypt’s Christian Copts make up the largest Christian bloc in the Middle East, so they are easily identified and quickly punished whenever one of their number angers Muslims. In fact, many of the aforementioned attacks on Egypt’s Coptic Christian churches were initiated as a form of collective punishment in response to the perceived transgressions of individual Copts:

- The March 2011 attack on the Church of the Two Martyrs—in which Muslims burned the church and played “soccer” with the martyrs’ relics—was prompted by the accusation that a Christian man was involved with a Muslim woman, which is banned in Islam.
- The May 2011 Imbaba riots—when some three thousand Muslims fired guns and set several Coptic churches and homes on fire—were prompted by the rumor that a Christian girl had converted to Islam and the Coptic Church was supposedly torturing her into renouncing Islam (the usual projection, since this is precisely what Islam requires Muslims to do to female apostates who convert to Christianity).
- The February 2012 attack on the Church of St. Mary and St. Abram in Sharqia province, when thousands of

Muslims surrounded the church demanding the death of its pastor—who, along with nearly a hundred terrorized Copts, sought refuge inside the church—came about because a Christian girl who, according to Sharia, automatically became a Muslim when her father converted to Islam, had fled her father and was said to be hiding in the church.

The collective punishment of Coptic Christians is a regular feature of the Egyptian landscape. More recent examples include the case of a Christian woman who was “severely sexually harassed” by Muslims in the presence of her husband at a bus terminal in al-Minya province in July 2011. When her husband tried to defend her, he was violently beaten. Soon afterwards, thousands of Muslims in the region began looting and torching Christian property, screaming “Allahu Akbar!” and “cursing the cross.”³⁹

In July 2012 in the village of Dahshur, a Christian launderer accidentally burned the shirt of a Muslim customer, leading to a brawl between the two Egyptians. The next day the aggrieved Muslim went with approximately twenty fellow Muslims to the Christian’s home to attack him. In the ensuing melee—the Christian had climbed up to his roof and was hurling projectiles at his besiegers—one Muslim man was injured; he later died in a hospital. Soon thereafter, thousands of Muslims went on a rampage, causing 120 Christian families to evacuate the village. The mob looted Christian businesses and homes. Eyewitnesses report that security sent to the village did next to nothing to protect Christian property. Family members of the deceased Muslim still insist that the Christians must pay with their lives.⁴⁰

In January 2012, a mob of over three thousand Muslims attacked Christians in an Alexandrian village because a Muslim had accused a Christian of having an “intimate photo” of a Muslim woman on his phone. Terrified by the accusation, the Christian, who denied having any such photo, turned himself in to the police. Regardless, Coptic homes and shops were looted and torched; three Christians were injured; and “terrorized” Christian women and children were rendered homeless. As usual, authorities were remarkably slow to arrive on the scene. It took

the army an hour to drive one mile to the village. “This happens every time. They wait outside the village until the Muslims have had enough violence, then they appear,” said a witness. None of the perpetrators was arrested.⁴¹ Later, in an effort to empty the village of its sixty-two Christian families, Muslims attacked them again, burning more Coptic property. According to police, the Muslim woman concerned has denied the whole story, and no photos were found.⁴²

In November 2011, after a Muslim torched a Christian’s home, leading to a fight between the two men which left the Muslim aggressor dead, thousands of Muslims attacked the Christians of the village. Two Christians not party to the altercation were killed; others were stabbed and critically wounded. As usual, “after killing the Copts, Muslims went on a rampage, looting and burning Christian owned homes and businesses.” Again, as in the Dahshur example, “Muslims insist they have not yet avenged” the death of their slain co-religionist; there were fears of “a wholesale massacre of Copts.” Once again, many Christians fled their homes and went into hiding.⁴³

In April 2011, when Muslims falsely blamed the deaths of two Muslims on a Christian in Abu Qurqas, mass riots ensued. One Christian was killed, ten were hospitalized, “an old woman was thrown out of her second floor balcony,” and at least twenty Christian homes and properties were plundered and torched.⁴⁴ And in November 2010, when a Coptic teenager was accused of dating a Muslim girl, twenty-two Christian homes were set ablaze to Islam’s war cry of “Allahu Akbar.” “During the attack the Muslim mob threw fireballs, gasoline, and stones at Coptic homes and detonated butane gas cylinders.”⁴⁵

In the above examples, Christians were attacked either because they fought back against Muslims or because they were rumored to have relationships with Muslim women—two things clearly banned by Sharia law. Indeed, the one condition that Caliph Omar himself is said to have personally stipulated when finalizing his *Conditions* with Christians is that they should under no circumstance ever raise their hand to a Muslim—even in self-defense—otherwise they forfeit all “protection.”

But almost any pretext suffices to justify collective punishment of Egypt’s Christians. Consider, for instance, the Kosheh Massacre of 1999.

After a Christian merchant and a Muslim quarreled in the Christian-majority village of Kosheh, Muslim mobs rioted and attacked, massacring twenty-one Christians, burning churches and homes, and looting property. Local authorities did little to intervene and, in fact, even participated in the massacre. A court acquitted ninety-four of ninety-six suspects; no one was sentenced for the killings.⁴⁶

While the Christians of Egypt are often prey to collective punishment, they are certainly not the only ones to suffer from it. Consider the ongoing collective punishment of Pakistan's Christians. One of the more egregious examples occurred in 1997, inspired by the usual false accusation that someone from the Christian-majority village of Shanti Nagar had "desecrated" a copy of the Koran. Mosques everywhere started blasting calls to avenge Islam. Accordingly, tens of thousands of Muslims descended on the Christian village, burning fourteen Christians and over three hundred homes. Seventy Christians, mostly women and children, were abducted; some were raped, and others were forced to convert to Islam—rape and forced conversions being especially prevalent in Pakistan.

More recently, consider the collective punishment visited upon Pakistan's Christians in response to the false accusation that a young Christian girl, Rimsha Masih, had desecrated a Koran in August 2012. Although Pakistan released her because the case had become an international liability—Rimsha's story, like that of Pastor Nadarkhani in Iran, reached the mainstream media, prompting much international criticism—many Christians in Pakistan were still brutalized by rioting Muslims who destroyed Christian homes and churches, tore Bibles to pieces, and broke crosses. The Christians from Rimsha's village, including many women and children, fled into the woods, building a church and settling there permanently.⁴⁷ Other Christians, knowing what was in store for them, held a symbolic funeral procession for themselves.⁴⁸

Their morbid predictions proved all too true—especially after another pretext for Muslims to exact collective punishment from Christians emerged: the Muhammad YouTube movie. After Friday prayers on September 21, 2012, Pakistani Muslims attacked, plundered, and killed the Christians in their midst. Hundreds of Muslims, armed with clubs and

sticks, ransacked St. Paul's Church in Mardan. After looting and desecrating it, they set the church on fire.⁴⁹

That same day, Muslims raided a nearby church-operated school, looting and torching it as well—and burning down a library containing more than three thousand Christian books. Ironically the library also contained thousands of books on Islam—making the Muslim mobs' actions blasphemous and themselves deserving of death under Pakistan's own laws, but of course the law was not enforced impartially: “the attack continued for more than three hours, with minimal efforts by the authorities to stop it.”⁵⁰

In a separate incident, gunmen riding motorbikes and dressed in green, Islam's color, opened fire on the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Cathedral in Hyderabad, murdering at least twenty-eight people. Their immediate target appears to have been a nun, Mother Christina. Days later, unidentified men reportedly threatened workers at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad, saying, “We will teach a lesson to the Christians,” and destroying the hospital's windows and doors.⁵¹

Such episodes of collective punishment are common throughout the Muslim world, and not just in Egypt and Pakistan. In 2009 in Indonesia, for example, after word got out that a Christian school teacher had allegedly insulted Islam in a passing comment she made to a student she was tutoring, five hundred Muslims rampaged the region, setting fire to several churches and sixty-seven homes.

Why do Egypt, Pakistan, and Indonesia see such identical patterns of attacks on Christians? These three nations differ in race, language, and culture. What do they have in common? Only Islam.

Nor is collective punishment limited to the deeds of nearby Christians. The actions of secular Westerners, oceans away, regularly incite Muslims to attack the Christians in their midst. When Muhammad cartoons were published in Europe, Christians in faraway Muslim countries such as Nigeria were killed in retaliation. When Pope Benedict quoted a historical document deemed insulting to Muhammad, anti-Christian riots around the Muslim world erupted, churches were burned, and a nun, Sister Leonella, was murdered in Somalia.⁵² When the previously unknown American pastor Terry Jones burned a Koran, Muslims

killed dozens of U.N. aid workers in Afghanistan, beheading some of them.

An April 2011 Fox News report reviewed the sorts of human rights abuses that Christians in Pakistan suffer—killed for “blasphemy,” constantly “abused in public and harassed in the street by groups of Muslim youths,” ostracized and treated unjustly by the government—and described the Muslim mentality that conflates Pakistan’s Christians with the West:

Life on any given day for Pakistani Christians is difficult. But members of Pakistan’s Christian community say now they’re being persecuted for U.S. drone attacks on Islamic militants hiding on the border with Afghanistan. The minority, which accounts for an estimated one percent of the country’s 170 million population, says *because its faith is strongly associated with America, it is targeted by Muslims*. “*When America does a drone strike, they come and blame us,*” [said] Faisal Massi, a 25-year old student from Sau Quarter, a Christian colony in Islamabad. “*They think we belong to America. It’s a simple mentality.*” [Emphasis added.]⁵³

It is the same in Iraq, where persecuted Christians have been targeted in part “over their religious ties with the West.”⁵⁴

This is by no means exclusively a modern phenomenon. There are precedents going back to the Middle Ages. Historian Robert Irwin points out that “Christians living under Muslim rule suffered during the crusading period. They were suspected of acting as spies or fifth columns for the Franks and later the Mongols as well.”⁵⁵ Indeed, according to Coptic chronicles, Saladin had many Christians in Egypt crucified in revenge against his Crusader enemies.⁵⁶ And if the Ottoman state was becoming more tolerant of its Christian subjects and abolished the jizya because of British, French, and Russian intervention in the nineteenth century, when World War I broke out and the Ottoman state warred against the British, French, and Russians, the dormant hate for Christians expressed itself in the Armenian Holocaust.

As globalization shrinks the world—and Muslims continue to conflate the West with Christianity—the reasons to persecute the Christian minorities of the Islamic world grow. Shared religion, even if only nominal, makes all “Christians” liable for one another—that is, collective punishment doled out by Muslims makes the weak and vulnerable Christians answerable for the actions of the strong.

The al-Qaeda-affiliated perpetrators of the October 2010 Baghdad church massacre went so far as to threaten all Christians around the world as “legitimate targets for the mujahedeen [holy warriors] wherever they can reach them.”⁵⁷ Bold as that sounds, the clause “wherever they can reach them” is a reminder that it is the Islamic world’s accessible, vulnerable Christians who will continue to be “reached.”

Forcible Conversions

Forced conversions permeate the whole of Islamic history. While the Koran states that “there is no coercion in religion”—and even Koran 9:29, which abrogates such verses, allows at least Christians and Jews the option to exist as dhimmis—the fact is, from the dawn of history up to the present, forced conversions have been a normal aspect of Islam. Not all were forced at the point of the sword; most forced conversions have been subtle and gradual, and yet forced nonetheless. As should be clear by now, the non-Muslim dhimmi’s life is made so miserable by oppressive Sharia stipulations—punctuated by sporadic persecutions—that converting to Islam is the only way to end the suffering, not to mention join the winning team. It is disingenuous not to count such conversions as “forced” or at least “coerced,” as Islam’s apologists habitually do.

One is reminded of the frank words of the Muslim historian Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi in the Middle Ages, describing the consequences of the especially severe wave of Christian persecution under the “mad caliph” al-Hakim, which included severing Christians’ tongues in punishment for speaking Coptic, Egypt’s last indigenous language⁵⁸: “Under these circumstances a great many Christians became Muslims.” Western apologists for Islam continue to portray the persecution of Christians as an aberration, but this is simply not true. As we have seen, after al-Hakim

died in 1021, Egypt's Christians continued to see wholesale persecution, extortion, and slaughter. This persecution went on for centuries and was especially severe under the Mamluk rulers of Egypt, who further meted out collective punishment on Egyptian Christians in the context of their ongoing battles against European Christians. Coptic chroniclers make clear that it was primarily under the Mamluk era that the overwhelming majority of Egypt's natives, the Coptic Christians, converted to Islam.⁵⁹ One does not imagine they abandoned the religion their forefathers died for simply on account of Islam's innate appeal.

In other formerly Christian nations, similar waves and even whole epochs of persecution saw the overwhelming majority of indigenous populations, the vast majority of whom had originally been Christians, convert to Islam or flee. Christian populations went from majorities to extinct species. This is the story across North Africa, from Libya to Morocco, where Christians, who were once the majority—St. Augustine, a pillar of Western Christianity, was Algerian—currently account for less than 1 percent of the population. Now that “democracy” and the “Arab Spring” have come to Iraq and Syria, Christian populations that have lived in those countries since the time of Jesus' disciples are now on their way to extinction, as shall be described in more detail below.

This is the true story of Islam's “spread.” Often forgotten is that at the time of the early Islamic conquests of the seventh till the end of the eleventh century, *half of the world's Christian population lived precisely in those nations subjugated by Islam*⁶⁰—including Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.⁶¹ In *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, the nineteenth-century historian Alfred Butler highlights the conquering Muslims' “vicious system of bribing the Christians into conversion”:

[A]lthough religious freedom was in theory secured for the Copts under the capitulation, it soon proved in fact to be shadowy and illusory. For a religious freedom which became identified with social bondage and with financial bondage could have neither substance nor vitality. As Islam spread, the social pressure upon the Copts became enormous, while the

financial pressure at least seemed harder to resist, as the number of Christians or Jews who were liable for the poll-tax [jizya] diminished year by year, and their isolation became more conspicuous.... [T]he burdens of the Christians grew heavier in proportion as their numbers lessened [that is, the more Christians converted to Islam, the more the burdens on the remaining few grew]. The wonder, therefore, is not that so many Copts yielded to the current which bore them with sweeping force over to Islam, but that so great a multitude of Christians stood firmly against the stream, nor have all the storms of thirteen centuries moved their faith from the rock of its foundation.⁶²

It is not an exaggeration to say that “the Islamic world” would be a fraction of its size, or might not even exist at all, were it not for the fact that non-Muslims were compelled to convert to Islam simply to evade oppression—beginning, as we have seen, with the earliest Arabs attacked by Muhammad. Once all these Christians converted to Islam, all their progeny became Muslim in perpetuity, thanks to Islam’s apostasy law.

Which leads to one of Islam’s most bitter ironies: a great many of today’s Christians, especially those in the Arab world, are being persecuted by Muslims whose own ancestors were persecuted Christians who converted to Islam to end their own suffering. In other words, Muslim descendants of persecuted Christians are today persecuting their Christian cousins—and thus perpetuating the cycle that made them Muslim in the first the place. Not, of course, that most Muslims are aware of this fact. Indeed, in 2011 the Egyptian Muslim scholar Fadel Soliman published a book that was well received and widely promoted in the Islamic world, including by Al Jazeera, entitled *Copts: Muslims Before Muhammad*, making the ahistorical and anachronistic—in a word, the absurd—argument that Egypt’s seventh-century Christians were really prototypical Muslims and that that is why Arabia’s Muslims came to “liberate” them from Christian rule.⁶³

As for the classic forced conversion—at the point of the sword—this, too, has been a regular feature of the Islamic world, past and present.

Contempt for non-Muslims, who are seen as inferior in light of the aforementioned Islamic doctrines, is the primary source of this phenomenon. While the average Muslim may not know the letter of the Sharia law, based on the cultural milieu he is raised in, he instinctively knows that being an infidel is a terrible thing. “Compelling” such people to embrace Islam is invariably rationalized as an altruistic act. After all, how bad can it be to force someone who is hell-bound into the true religion? Why apologize for this? Why be penalized for putting them on the correct path?

Consider the following anecdotes separated by five hundred years, which demonstrate the continuity of forced conversions and the price paid by Christians who refuse. In the year 1522, local Muslims denounced two Christian brothers in Egypt named Gabriel and Kyrmidoles for blasphemy—“mostly out of jealousy and envy.” So the emir arrested them and “began flattering them and asking questions about their faith.” The brothers made it clear that they were firm adherents of Christianity. “The Muslims in the audience became enraged with the brothers when they heard their answers, and they began screaming and demanding they must become Muslims.” The brothers responded by refusing to “deny the faith we received from our forefathers, but we will remain unshaken and very firm in it until the end.”

The Muslim judge deciding their case told the Christian brothers that if they simply embraced Islam, they “would be given many honors and much glory.” Otherwise they would die. At that point, the brothers’ mother came to support them, but “when the Muslims in court noticed her, they fell upon her, tore her clothing, and gave her a thorough beating.”

After rebuking the Muslim assailants for their savagery, the brothers reaffirmed that they would never deny Christ for Islam, adding, “behold our necks, do what you wish, but do it quickly.” Then,

Hearing this, one of the Muslims in the audience became so angry that he took out a knife and stabbed Kyrmidoles in the chest, while someone else kicked him as hard as possible, and another dropped a large stone on his head. Finally, they

plucked out his eyes. Thus Kyrmidoles died. As for Gabriel they threw him to the ground and one of the soldiers severed his right shoulder and then proceeded and cut off his head.⁶⁴

One does not doubt that Islamic slogans—chief among them, “Allahu Akbar!”—were being screamed in the courtroom during this proceeding.

Compare this incident from nearly five hundred years ago with the following incident from August 2011 in Pakistan. According to World Watch Monitor, two Christian men, Ishfaq Munawar and Naeem Masih, were returning from a church service when six Muslims accosted them. The Muslims questioned them about their faith and later tried to force the two Christians to recite the *Kalma*—a single recitation of the *shehada*, the Islamic conversion creed, “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”—and become Muslims, “telling them that this was the only way they could live peacefully in the city. They also offered monetary incentives and ‘protection’ to Ishfaq and Naeem, but the two refused to renounce Christianity.”

“After cajoling the two Christians for some time,” the Muslims pretended to go away, only to ram their car into the Christians. Then they “got out of the car armed with iron rods and attacked Ishfaq and Naeem, shouting that they should either recite the *Kalma* or be prepared to die.” The Muslims “severely beat the two Christians, fracturing Ishfaq Munawar’s jaw and breaking five teeth, and seriously injuring Masih.... The two Christians fell unconscious, and the young Muslim men left assuming they had killed them.”⁶⁵

Not all Christians who refuse to convert to Islam survive to tell the tale. In March 2010, Muslim men butchered Rasheed Masih, described as a “devoted Christian,” “with multiple axe blows for refusing to convert to Islam.” Earlier, “six men had threatened to kill 36-year-old Rasheed Masih unless he converted to Islam when they grew resentful of his potato business succeeding beyond their own.” According to a pastor who knew Rasheed, “As the Christian family [of Rasheed] strengthened in business and earned more, the Muslim men began to harbor business resentment, as Muslims are not used to seeing Christians more respected and richer than them.” Eventually he was lured to one

of their farmhouses, where he was slaughtered by means of repeated axe blows. The autopsy revealed he had twenty-four wounds.⁶⁶

The above accounts, one from medieval Egypt and two from modern-day Pakistan, are separated by culture, language, thousands of miles, and half a millennium. How can we explain the identical patterns—envious or resentful Muslims, Christians threatened to convert to Islam, and murderous responses when they refuse? What binds these stories together? The only honest answer is Islamic culture.

Even institutions of forced conversion once thought defunct are being revived in modern Islam. Throughout Islamic history, Muslim empires abducted Christian children, forced them to convert to Islam, raised them to be jihadis par excellence, and then unleashed them on their own Christian people. This is the story of the Janissaries of the Ottoman Empire and the Mamluks of Egypt.⁶⁷ (The word “Mamluk” originally meant “owned”—slaves—but the Egyptian Mamluks eventually took over the sultanate.)

Today, the same story is once again being repeated around the Islamic world. *AsiaNews* reported in September 2012 on approximately three hundred Christian children in Bangladesh who were recently abducted and “forcibly converted to Islam.” Middlemen visit “poverty-stricken communities” and convince Christian families to send their children to school at supposed mission hostels, charging them a significant amount of money for schooling, room, and board. But the children never make it to the hostels: “After pocketing the money, the intermediaries sell the children to Islamic schools elsewhere in the country ‘where imams force them to abjure Christianity.’” The children are then instructed in Islam and beaten. After full indoctrination, they are asked if they are “ready to give their lives for Islam,” presumably by becoming jihadi suicide-bombers.⁶⁸

The tiny Palestinian Christian community in the Hamas-run Gaza strip is under siege from Muslim kidnappers. In July 2012, five Christians were abducted and pressured into converting to Islam. Because Christians protested the forced conversions, “members of the Christian community now fear reprisal attacks by Muslim extremists.” Some have appealed to the Vatican and Christian groups and churches in the West for help.

Yet “‘we only hear voices telling us to stay where we are and to stop making too much noise,’ said a Christian man living in Gaza City. ‘If they continue to turn a blind eye to our tragedy, in a few months there will be no Christians left in Palestine. Today it’s happening in the Gaza Strip, tomorrow it will take place in Bethlehem.’”⁶⁹ Indeed, Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christianity’s founder, boasted a Christian population of 60 percent in 1990, but only 15 percent of those living there today are Christians.⁷⁰

The fact that Islamic indoctrination tends to inspire Muslims to put pressure on Christians to convert is exemplified by an August 2012 incident in Pakistan. After a Muslim opened a *madrassa*—that is, an Islamic school—near where Christians held their tent church worship, Muslims began harassing the Christians, spraying their homes with bullets and saying, “Convert to Islam or leave this neighborhood.” They also tried to trick a pastor into confessing that he proselytizes Muslims, and they gathered in front of the church to harass Christian girls as they left after services.⁷¹

Just as they have done for over a millennium, Muslim authorities still offer Christians reprieve from their sufferings if they only convert to Islam. In Uzbekistan in August 2012, a twenty-six-year-old Christian woman, partially paralyzed from youth, and her mother were violently attacked with sticks by six men who broke into their home at 4:00 a.m. The men ransacked the house, confiscating “icons, bibles, religious calendars, and prayer books.” When the paralyzed woman furtively tried to phone for help, she was beaten again. The home invaders and the Christian women were all taken to the police department, where the paralyzed woman was “offered to convert to Islam.” She refused, and the judge eventually “decided that the women had resisted police and had stored the banned religious literature at home and conducted missionary activities. He fined them 20 minimum monthly wages each.”⁷²

In Pakistan in November 2011, a Christian couple was arrested on a false charge and severely beaten by police. The pregnant wife was “kicked and punched” even as her interrogators threatened to kill her unborn fetus. A policeman offered to drop the theft charge if the husband would only “renounce Christianity and convert to Islam.”⁷³ Likewise in

August 2011, Muslims beat unconscious a Christian man celebrating Pakistan's Independence Day; they told him he should convert to Islam if he wanted to join in the celebration.⁷⁴

In Sudan in February 2011, Muslims kidnapped a fifteen-year-old Christian girl, Hiba Abdelfadil Anglo. Her mother, a widow, received menacing phone calls ordering her to pay \$1,500 Sudanese pounds to get back her daughter, who was referred to as a "slave." When the mother went to the police station to open a case, officer Fakhr El-Dean Mustafa, of the ironically named "Family and Child Protection Unit," told her, "You must convert to Islam if you want your daughter back." Soon after the mother's Muslim employer told her she could take time off to find her daughter, she was fired.⁷⁵

Over one year later, the girl managed to escape after having pretended to convert to Islam. She had been locked in a room and "beaten until she was unconscious." The leader of the Muslim gang raped and beat her. In her own words:

Several times I was warned that if I do not convert to Islam, then I risk losing my life.... The man who put me in his house on several occasions tortured me and threatened to kill me. He did not allow me to pray Christian prayers. He even insulted my family as a family of infidels.... Apart from abusing me sexually, he tried to force me to change my faith and kept reminding me to prepare for Ramadan [the Muslim holy month].... I cannot forget this bad incident, and whenever I try to pray, I find it difficult to forget. I ask believers to pray for me for inner healing.⁷⁶

The Jihad on Christian Women: Abduction, Rape, and Forced Conversion

Hiba's story is tragically common. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Christians being forced to convert to Islam are women, who are pressured by means of rapes and beatings. There are several reasons that Muslims specially target women for forced conversion. First and foremost

is the fact that in the Koran and according to Sharia, non-Muslim women are to be treated as plunder by Muslim men in the context of jihad. Both the Prophet of Islam and his followers regularly abducted women from non-Muslim tribes and kept them as concubines, or sex slaves. This practice is even sanctioned in the Koran: “Marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice, then only one, or what your right hands possess.” (Koran 4:3). Islamic authorities understand “what your right hands possess” as women taken captive in war.⁷⁷

Indeed, the institution of infidel sex slaves is so well documented in the whole of Islamic history and doctrine that various Muslim scholars and activists today are calling for its official revival. Salwa al-Mutairi, a female political activist and former parliamentary candidate for Kuwait’s government, is pushing for the legalization of enslaving and selling non-Muslim women for sexual purposes.

In a 2011 video she posted on YouTube, Mutairi insists that “it’s of course true” that “the prophet of Islam legitimized sex slavery.” She recounts how when she was in Mecca, Islam’s holiest city, she asked various sheikhs and muftis about the legality of sex slavery according to Sharia, and they all confirmed it to be perfectly legal. Kuwaiti scholars further pointed out that extra-virile men would do well to purchase sex slaves to sate their appetites so they will not be tempted to sin by fornicating with Muslim women. In Mutairi’s own words:

A Muslim state must attack a Christian state—sorry, I mean any non-Muslim state—and they [the future sex slaves] must be captives of the raid. Is this forbidden? Not at all; according to Islam, sex slaves are not at all forbidden. Quite the contrary, the rules regulating sex slaves differ from those for free women: the latter’s body must be covered entirely, except for her face and hands, whereas the sex slave is kept naked from the bellybutton on up—she is different from the free woman; the free woman has to be married properly to her husband, but the sex slave—he just buys her and that’s that.

Mutairi went on to suggest where Muslim men might acquire sex slaves: “For example, in the Chechnyan war, surely there are female Russian captives. So go and buy those and sell them here in Kuwait; better that than have our men engage in forbidden sexual relations. I don’t see any problem in this, no problem at all.”

Nor is the Kuwaiti politician ignorant of Islamic history. She further justified the institution of sex slavery by invoking eighth-century Caliph Harun al-Rashid—who is known in the West from the *Arabian Nights* as a fun-loving, philandering caliph, but who was in reality pious enough to destroy churches and persecute Christians: “And the greatest example we have is Harun al-Rashid: when he died, he had 2,000 sex-slaves—so it’s okay, nothing wrong with it.”⁷⁸

Likewise, Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini, a popular Salafi preacher in Egypt, appeared on Hikma TV in May 2011 and explained that after Muslims invade and conquer a non-Muslim nation, the properties and persons of those infidels who refuse to convert or pay *jizya* and live as subjugated *dhimmis* are to be seized as *ghanima*, or “spoils of war,” distributed among the Muslim jihadis or taken to “the slave market, where slave-girls and concubines are sold.”

Al-Huwaini referred to these sex slaves by the dehumanizing appellation that the Koran gives them, *ma malakat aymanukum*—“what [not *whom*] your right hands possess”—in this context, sex-slaves: “You go to the market and buy her, and she becomes like your legal mate—though without a contract, a guardian, or any of that stuff—and this is agreed upon by the ulema. In other words, when I want a sex-slave, I go to the market and pick whichever female I desire and buy her.”⁷⁹

This position is not “radical,” although more discreet Muslims may downplay it in public. In a memorable scene on live TV in Egypt, when Sheikh Gamal Qutb was asked if Islam permits men to enslave and rape female captives of jihad, the one-time grand mufti of Islam’s most authoritative university, Al Azhar, refused to answer; when pressed, he became hostile and stormed off the set.⁸⁰

Little wonder non-Muslim women surrounded by Muslims face serious problems. While, strictly speaking, a jihad must be in process for Muslims to abduct and enslave such women, this technicality is regularly

rationalized away. Sharia has created a culture in which horrific abuses even beyond those actually justified by Sharia are commonplace. As will be seen below, some Muslims rationalize that, by not paying jizya, Christians are not protected and thus are fair game, as in a jihad. Other Muslims, Salafis especially, consider themselves in a constant state of jihad so long as the nation they are living in is not fully governed according to Sharia. Rationalizations are many and easy to come by in the service of vice, and the institution of Islamic sex slavery is built atop vice and perversion.

Spotlight on Egypt

The situation for Christian women in Egypt is so bad that in July 2012 the U.S. Congress heard testimony about what Representative Chris Smith called the “escalating abduction, coerced conversion and forced marriage of Coptic Christian women and girls. Those women are being terrorized and, consequently, marginalized, in the formation of the new Egypt. Sadly, the vulnerability and abduction of Coptic Christians is not a new problem. Going back to the 1970s, when Anwar Sadat used Islamism to solidify his leadership of Egypt, Coptic women and girls have been abducted, forced to marry their captors, and coercively converted to Islam.”⁸¹

Indeed the late Coptic Pope Shenouda III decried this phenomenon back in 1976, saying, “There is a practice to convert Coptic girls to embrace Islam and marry them under terror to Muslim husbands.”⁸²

The report from Christian Solidarity International (CSI) that prompted these congressional hearings, entitled “Tell My Mother I Miss Her,” demonstrates that “Coptic women and girls are deceptively lured or abducted into forced marriages with Muslim men” and forced to renounce Christianity and convert to Islam. Its findings confirm those of a previous CSI report published in 2009: “The Disappearance, Forced Conversions and Forced Marriages of Coptic Christian Women in Egypt.”

At least 550 cases of abduction, rape, and forced conversion of Christian women have been documented in the last five years in Egypt. Such incidents have only increased since the “Arab Spring.” CSI details

the various ways Christian women are entrapped. One young mother was snatched in broad daylight; as her abductor dragged her to a waiting taxi he shouted to bystanders, “No one interfere! She is an enemy of Islam.” Others are befriended by friends or relatives of their kidnappers, only to be drugged and abducted.

“Tell My Mother I Miss Her” also explains what typically happens after abduction. Those who manage to escape back to their families tell of how they were raped and told they could not go home because their families would reject them. Many are beaten, while others are forced into slavery. Finally, these women are repeatedly told that the only way to be safe and lead a normal life is to convert to Islam, and many of them come to believe it.⁸³

In July 2011, a few months after President Mubarak was ousted, the Assyrian International News Agency reported that “the number of Christian girls abducted and coerced into converting to Islam since the Egyptian ‘January 25 Revolution’ has skyrocketed.... More than two to three girls disappear everyday in Giza alone.... The cases that are brought to public attention are few compared to what the numbers actually are.”

The increase in female Christian abductions is directly related to the fact that, with the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Salafis have become more emboldened. Salafis “believe strongly that converting a Christian infidel is in some ways like earning a ticket to paradise—not to mention the earthly remuneration they get from the Saudis,” quipped an Egyptian activist.

The Assyrian International News Agency also noted that Egypt4Christ, a Christian human rights organization,

exposed a highly organized Muslim ring centered in the Fatah Mosque in Alexandria. The investigation also uncovered a systematic “religious call” plan, where young Muslim males in high school and university are urged to approach Coptic girls in the 9–15 age group and manipulate them through sexual exploitation and blackmail. The plan ... aims at sexually compromising Christian girls, defiling them and humiliating them in front of their parents, thereby forcing them to flee

their homes, and use conversion to Islam as a “solution” for their problems.⁸⁴

Coptic Solidarity president Adel Guindy concurs that much of the abuse is part of a systematic strategy:

Any objective and fair review of the cases of forced conversion of Coptic girls, which started four decades ago but dramatically escalated after January 2011 [when the “Arab Spring” reached Egypt], will show a clear pattern of events that point to well organized “hidden hands” behind the process. Amazingly, the collusion of Egypt’s security as well as judiciary authorities—in defiance of the existing laws concerning minors—shows the extent of the scheme. It is part of a “war of attrition” against the Copts in their own homeland.⁸⁵

Human rights activist Magdi Khalil agrees: “Abducting and converting Coptic girls to Islam is not only a result of the paranoid and racist incitation against the Copts, but it is an organized and pre-planned process by associations and organizations inside Egypt with domestic and Arab funding as the main role in seducing and luring Coptic girls carried through cunning, deceit and enticement or through force if required.”⁸⁶

On top of all this, in August 2012, when Egypt’s Constituent Assembly proposed a law to criminalize “forced labor, slavery, the trafficking of women and children, human organs, and the sex trade,” from which female Christians would especially benefit, Islamists complained. Muhammad Saad Gawish, a member of the Constituent Assembly, wondered, “How can an article mention human trafficking when this is not happening in Egypt?” Yunis Makhiyun, another Constituent Assembly member, complained that “this article will give [Egypt’s] citizens the impression that things like slavery, trafficking in females and children, are happening in Egyptian society, when such things do not exist.”⁸⁷ Rather tellingly, both of these men are also members of Egypt’s Salafi

Nour Party, which is especially associated with the organized abduction, enslavement, and selling of Christian women and children in Egypt.

The very latest examples of abduction in Egypt indicate that the abductors are only getting bolder and more violent. In a Christian village on a Sunday morning in October 2012, Ali Hussein, a Muslim gang leader, and his two ex-convict brothers broke into the home of a Christian family, demanding that Hiyam Zaki, a twenty-five-year-old mother of two children “come and live with him.” Hussein had previously demanded that the family either pay him one million Egyptian pounds or forfeit the Christian woman to him. Because the family rejected his demands, his gang indiscriminately opened fire in the house, killing Hiyam’s elderly father and another relative. Earlier, to terrorize the inhabitants of the Christian village, the Muslim gang had gone through stables and slaughtered all their farm animals. Because Hussein himself was also killed in the incident—though it is unclear who fired at him—a Muslim mob surrounded the local hospital demanding revenge on the Christians for the “Christian killing of a Muslim man,” while referring to the slain Hussein—who was an extortionist, rapist, and gangster—as “the beloved of the Prophet.”⁸⁸

Right around the same time elsewhere in Egypt, fourteen-year old Sarah, a Christian girl, was kidnapped on her way to school by the son of an Islamic preacher. After filing a missing person report with police, Sarah’s father received an anonymous call telling him that he would never see his daughter again. “Security knows her whereabouts,” said Father Bigem, a local priest, “and they make promises to resolve the crisis, but it’s just words.” After several human rights organizations called for the girl’s release, “the Salafi Front issued a statement on October 28, warning human rights organizations, especially the National Council for Women, not to attempt to return Sarah to her family, as she has converted to Islam and married a Muslim man.” The Salafis, projecting Islamic mores onto the Christian family, said that if Sarah returned to her family she would be killed by her father—to which her devastated father replied, “I want my child back in my arms, even if she became a Muslim.”⁸⁹

Spotlight on Pakistan

It is the same in Pakistan, where, in the words of the *Pakistan Christian Post*, the “persecution, kidnapping and abduction of Christian women and girls,” including many married women with children, are on the rise. There are approximately seven hundred cases every year, a large number considering that Christians make up roughly 1 percent of the population. (Unsurprisingly, their numbers are shrinking.) In October 2011, the Asian Human Rights Commission summarized the phenomenon:

The forced conversion to Islam of women from religious minority groups through rape and abduction has reached an alarming stage which challenges interfaith harmony due to the total collapse of the rule of law and *biased attitude of the judicial officers*. *It appears today that no one, from the judiciary to the police and even the government has the courage to stand up to the threats from Muslim fundamentalist groups. The situation is worse with the police who always side with the Islamic groups and treat minority groups as lowly life forms.* The dark side of the forced conversion to Islam is not restricted only to the religious Muslim groups but also involves the *criminal elements* who are engaged in rape and abduction and then justify their heinous crimes by forcing the victims to convert to Islam. The Muslim fundamentalists are happy to offer these criminals shelter and use the excuse that they are providing a great service to their sacred cause of increasing the population of Muslims. [Emphasis added.]⁹⁰

The Commission’s report summarizes the situation well—from the ingrained contempt for minorities to the unwavering complicity of authorities. And let us consider the “dark side” it alludes to, concerning how “criminal elements” thrive in this environment. For example, the brutalization of Christian children by rapists is rife in neighboring Afghanistan.⁹¹ Islam’s teachings have dehumanized Christian children in the collective Muslim consciousness, prompting not only “extremists”

but pedophiles and other sex offenders to use and abuse them at will while “moderates” look the other way.

At the same time as the blasphemy case concerning Rimsha Masih—the fourteen-year-old Christian girl arrested in August 2012 on false accusations that she had burned pages of the Koran—was prompting international outrage, two other Christian children were raped and murdered in Pakistan without their cases garnering attention.

Twelve-year-old Muqadas Kainat was ambushed in a field near her home in Sahawil by five Muslim men who “gang raped and murdered” her. Her father was at a hospital visiting her sick mother at the time. He and other family members began a frantic search, until a tip led them to the field where his daughter’s body lay. The postmortem revealed that she had been “gang raped and later strangled to death by five men.” Police, as usual, did not arrest any of the perpetrators.⁹²

And just a few days later eleven-year-old Samuel Yaqoob went to the markets of Faisalabad to buy food for his family, never to return. According to Wilson Chowdhry, Chairman of the British Pakistani Christian Association,

After extensive searching his body was found near a drain in the Christian colony, bearing marks of horrific torture, with the murder weapon nearby. His nose, lips and belly had been sliced off, and his family could hardly recognize him because the body was so badly burnt. Some 23 wounds by a sharp weapon have been identified in the autopsy. When sending his body for an autopsy, police raised the possibility of sodomy. . . . Parts of Pakistani culture have a strong homosexual pederast culture, and Christian and other minority boys are especially susceptible to rape and abuse because of the powerlessness of their community and their despised status. . . . In one case fairly recently, a Christian boy was kidnapped, raped, tortured and killed by a police officer, his body similarly being dumped in a drain.⁹³

And there are many more documented cases:

- Kiran George, a Christian girl who was “enslaved by a woman, Sama, a dealer of youth to be sold as prostitutes or slaves to wealthy Muslim families,” was doused with gasoline by a police officer involved in the sex ring, set on fire, and fatally burned in March 2010.⁹⁴
- Nisha, a nine-year-old Christian girl, was abducted by Muslims, gang-raped, murdered by repeated blows to her head, and then dumped into a canal in May 2009.⁹⁵
- Gulfam, another nine-year-old Christian girl, was raped by a Muslim man in December 2010. Though not killed, she was left “in shock and in the throes of a physical and psychological trauma.” During her ordeal, her rapist told her “not to worry because he had done the same service to other young Christian girls.”⁹⁶
- Lubna, a twelve-year-old Christian girl was kidnapped, gang-raped, and murdered by a group of Muslims in October 2010.⁹⁷
- Kidnapped on Christmas Eve 2010, a twelve-year-old Christian girl, “Anna,” was gang-raped for eight months, forcibly converted, and then “married” to her Muslim attacker. After she escaped, instead of seeing justice done, “the Christian family is in hiding from the rapists and the police.”⁹⁸
- In June 2012 after gang-raping a thirteen-year-old Christian girl, a band of Muslims came to her house when all male members were away working and “mercilessly” beat her pregnant aunt for reporting them, causing her to lose twins to miscarriage: “They murdered our children, they raped our daughter. We have nothing left with us,” lamented an older family member. The police went on to pressure the family to drop the case, “accusing a 13-year-old rape victim of committing adultery with three men.”⁹⁹
- Muslims abducted Mehek, a fourteen-year-old Christian girl, at gunpoint “in broad daylight” from her parents’ house in August 2011. One of her abductors mockingly

declared that he would “purify her” by making her “convert to Islam and become my mistress.”¹⁰⁰

- In December 2011 a Muslim man murdered a teenage Christian girl named Amariah during an attempted rape. He had “grabbed the girl and, under the threat of a gun, tried to drag her away. The young Christian woman resisted, trying to escape the clutches of her attacker, when the man opened fire and killed her instantly, and later tried to conceal the corpse.”¹⁰¹
- Shazia, a twelve-year-old Christian girl, was enslaved, raped, and murdered by Chaudhry Naeem, a wealthy Muslim attorney, who was acquitted. His wife and son had also participated in abusing the child. “For the family of Shazia justice has not been done. It is not the first time that, in cases like this, the outcome of the process leaves influential Muslim citizens unpunished, despite the atrocities committed on poor and helpless Christians,” said the head of a human rights organization in November 2010.¹⁰²
- In May 2011 a powerful Muslim businessman had two Christian sisters kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam, and “married” to him.¹⁰³
- In October 2012 a fourteen-year-old Christian girl, Timar Shahzadi, was “pounced” on and “dragged” away by Muslim men as she was coming home from school. The family, fearful that she would be “forcefully converted to become a Muslim and then married off if immediate steps are not taken,” reported the incident to police, who did nothing.¹⁰⁴
- In the same month, a court ordered a Christian girl, Rebeca—who had been kidnapped, forced to convert to Islam, and married to her abductor—to be returned to her kidnapper “husband,” despite her father’s pleas and the girl’s obviously traumatized demeanor in court.¹⁰⁵
- In September 2012 Shumaila Masih, a sixteen-year-old Christian girl, was forcibly abducted from the street by

three Muslim men, taken to one of their homes, and gang-raped for hours. The attack took place outdoors at 11:00 a.m., but no one intervened despite the girl's desperate pleas for help. Around 5:00 p.m., returning from work, her father and his cousins began searching for her. When they came to the house where she was being raped, they heard her cries and rushed to her. "At the sight of the men, the three young Muslims fled, leaving Shumaila naked and in pain on the bed."¹⁰⁶

The above anecdotes are a mere sampling of the documented atrocities committed against the children of Pakistan's Christians. And of course there are the stories that fail to come to the notice of human rights organizations and never make it into any media—stories of silent abuse that only the nameless, faceless victims know. It took five years for the story of a two-year-old toddler who was savagely raped because her Christian father refused to convert to Islam to become public. After undergoing five surgeries, she remains disfigured, suffering from several permanent complications. Her family lives in fear and hiding.¹⁰⁷

How many Christian children in Pakistan and other Muslim nations are being mauled in silence, with their stories never surfacing? This savagery is fueled by an Islamic culture that dehumanizes the non-Muslim. Local sources speaking to Agenzia Fides, the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies, about the rape of nine-year-old Gulfam said, "It is shameful. Such incidents occur frequently. *Christian girls are considered goods to be damaged at leisure. Abusing them is a right. According to the community's mentality it is not even a crime. Muslims regard them as spoils of war* [emphasis added]."¹⁰⁸

This assertion agrees very well with what Kuwaiti activist Mutairi and Egyptian cleric Huwaini have said in favor of the practice of using infidel sex slaves, and indeed with what Sharia law teaches—that infidel women are possessions to be bought and sold for Muslim use. Sharia expert Majid Khadduri explained the idea of human "spoils" in his *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*:

The term spoil (*ghanima*) is applied specifically to property acquired by force from non-Muslims. It includes, however, not only property (movable and immovable) *but also persons, whether in the capacity of asra (prisoners of war) or sabi (women and children).... If the slave were a woman, the master was permitted to have sexual connection with her as a concubine.* [Emphasis added.]¹⁰⁹

This view of non-Muslim women and children as objects of sexual gratification to be used and abused at will is not limited to the Muslim world; it manifests itself wherever significant numbers of Muslims live side by side with non-Muslims. In May 2012, for instance, Gatestone Institute published a telling report on Muslims in Britain, “pillars of their community” who “were sentenced to a total of 77 years in prison after being convicted of rape, aiding and abetting rape, conspiracy to engage in sexual activity with a child, sexual assault and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation”:

Nine Muslim men belonging to a child-rape gang in north-western England have received hefty prison sentences for trafficking and raping young British girls. The three-month sexual grooming trial at a court in Liverpool, which ended on May 9, has drawn nationwide attention to the sexual abuse of children and women by Muslim immigrants, and British police are currently investigating at least 40 other cases of child rapes perpetrated by Muslims in northern England.... The Liverpool Crown Court heard horrific testimony from five victims—the youngest was 13 when the abuse began—who were plied with alcohol, drugs and gifts so they could be “passed around” among a group of men aged between 24 and 59 for sex in apartments, houses, cars, taxis and kebab shops.... Several of the men on trial in Liverpool apparently told their victims that it was all right for them to be passed around for sex with dozens of men “*because it’s what we do in our country.*” [Emphasis added.]¹¹⁰

MUSLIM JIHADIS: YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE

According to Koran 9:29, war on the People of the Book—Christians and Jews—concludes only when they “pay the jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued”—that is, when they pay tribute and live under Islamic subjugation. From the very beginning, then, Christians literally had to “purchase” their right to exist from their Muslim conquerors.

Buying off their subjugators took two forms: 1) *As an institution*: jizya was to be ritually and methodically collected from subjugated Christians. This tribute went on for centuries until it was abolished in the nineteenth century by intervening European powers. 2) *As a way of life*: before jizya became institutionalized (and again at the present moment, because it is no longer institutionalized) Christians were regularly plundered and ransacked by marauding Muslims. The institution of jizya is a product of Islamic doctrine. The unsystematic plundering of Christians is a product of Islamic culture, which sees Christians as undesirable inferiors to be used for the benefit of Muslims. Today, Muslims calling for the re-institutionalization of jizya believe they are authorized to take it upon themselves to plunder the Christians in their midst until such time that jizya is formally collected from Christians. The “criminal elements” that thrive under Islam rationalize their greed by portraying themselves as jizya-vigilantes.

That Christians and Jews under Muslim domination must purchase their very lives is indicated by the fact that the Arabic word jizya itself simply means to “repay” or “recompense.” Conquered non-Muslims were to compensate Muslims with money for not taking their lives. Otherwise, not just their lives but their properties and families were forfeited.

Islamic jurists are explicit. Abu Yusuf, a prominent eighth-century interpreter of Sharia, writes that the dhimmis’ “lives and their possessions are only protected by reason of payment of jizya.”¹¹¹ Nearly thirteen hundred years later, in the twentieth century, Algerian cleric Muhammad ibn Yusuf wrote that jizya “is to compensate for their not being slain.

Its purpose is to substitute for the duties of killing and slavery. . . . It is for the benefit of Muslims.”¹¹² Western academics correctly call *jizya* “protection money,” which it is—but protection not from outsiders, as is sometimes suggested by academic apologists for Islam, but from Islam itself—protection which, unless paid, means the life of the infidel is forfeit. In the medieval era, *dhimmi* travelers sometimes had to wear their *jizya* receipts around their necks as proof that their lives had been ransomed. Otherwise they could be slain and plundered by any passing Muslim.

Consider the words of Caliph Omar, the “righteous caliph” most associated with Islamic doctrine on the subjugation of Christians: “Summon the people to Allah; those who respond to your call, accept it from them, but those who refuse must pay the *jizya* out of humiliation and lowliness. If they refuse this, it is the sword without leniency.”¹¹³ If non-Muslims do not ransom their lives, then they must die.

From the beginnings of the Islamic conquest till the end of the Umayyad caliphate (c. 634-750), before the teachings of the Koran were codified, collecting *jizya* from Christians usually amounted to wholesale plunder.

For instance, Amr bin al-As, the Islamic jihadi who conquered Egypt in the early 640s, tortured and killed any Christian Copt who tried to conceal his wealth. When a Copt inquired of him, “How much *jizya* are we to pay?” the Islamic hero replied, “If you give me all that you own—from the ground to the ceiling—I will not tell you how much you owe. Instead, you [the Christian Copts] are our treasure chest, so that, if we are in need, you will be in need, and if things are easy for us, they will be easy for you.”¹¹⁴

Yet even that was not enough. Caliph Uthman later chided Amr bin al-As because another governor of Egypt had managed to increase the caliphate’s treasury double what Amr had. In the words of Uthman, the “milk camels [Egypt’s Christians, that is] . . . yielded more milk.”¹¹⁵ Years later, yet another caliph, Suliman Abdul Malik, wrote to the governor of Egypt advising him “to milk the camel until it gives no more milk, and until it milks blood.”¹¹⁶

A Coptic chronicle describes the situation of Egyptian Christians in the 700s:

And out of love for money he [the Muslim governor of Egypt] commanded the governors to put the people to death, and bring him their money; and wrote to them, saying: "I have delivered up to you the lives of the people, therefore collect all the wealth that you can, from bishops or monks or churches or any of the people, and bring stuffs and money and cattle and all that you find belonging to them, and respect no one. And whatever place you visit, pillage it." Accordingly, the officials laid the country waste and carried off the columns and the woodwork, and sold what was worth ten dinars for one dinar. ... "

Many Christian monks were tortured and mutilated for money.¹¹⁷ The same story of rapacity and brutality was repeated all over the Islamic empire. In Armenia decades after the above anecdote, a Christian chronicler wrote,

In the reign of Abdallah [Abu Jafar al-Mansur, who ruled from 754–775] and on the orders of Yazid, Armenia was struck by extremely onerous taxation. The infernal avarice of the implacable enemy was not satisfied with devouring the flesh of the Christians, the flower of the country, nor with drinking their blood as we drink water; Armenia in its entirety suffered horribly from the absolute lack of money. Every individual, even by giving all he had, his clothes, his food stuffs and prime necessities, did not succeed in paying his ransom and redeeming his person from torture. Gibbets, presses and gallows had been set up everywhere; nothing but fearful and continual torture was seen everywhere.¹¹⁸

While such episodes typify the early years of Islam, they punctuate the whole of dhimmi history from one corner of the Islamic world to the

other. The cautious *jizya* entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* states that “with or without doctrinal justification, arbitrary demands [for money] appeared at times.” Even the medieval Marco Polo, whose chronicles appear impartial and objective,¹¹⁹ made an interesting observation concerning the Muslims in Tauris (modern day Iraq) in the thirteenth century:

According to their doctrine, whatever is stolen or plundered from others of a different faith, is properly taken, and the theft is no crime; whilst those who suffer death or injury by the hands of Christians [during the course of a plunder-driven raid], are considered as martyrs. If, therefore, they were not prohibited and restrained by the powers who now govern them, they would commit many outrages. These principles are common to all Saracens.¹²⁰

This lust for money was so great in the early years of Islam, under the Umayyads, that many non-Muslims tried to convert to Islam to avoid absolute poverty and destitution only to be prevented from converting by the Muslim governors, who preferred to treat them as “milk camels.”

With the codification of *jizya*, the havoc gave way to systematic collection—punctuated by only occasional eruptions of violent rapine—and Christians settled in for centuries of slow bleeding. Juridical opinions concerning the amount of money *dhimmi*s were to pay varied, from the minimal one dinar to sums that were ruinous for previously thriving, now impoverished non-Muslim communities. Institutionalized *jizya*—financial extortion—was another factor, on top of legal discrimination and physical persecution, which compelled nearly half of the then-Christian world to convert to Islam, while impoverishing most of the rest. Despite what apologists for Islam now teach in classrooms in the West, primary sources provide abundant proof that the *jizya* was sometimes “exact[ed] from children, widows, orphans, and even the dead.”¹²¹ In fact at least one school of Muslim law, the Shafi‘i, asserts, “Our religion compels the poll tax to be paid by dying people, the old, even in a state of incapacity, the blind, monks, workers, and the poor, incapable of practicing a trade.”¹²²

Much of this financial fleecing came to an end thanks to Western intervention. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, one Muslim region after another abolished the *jizya* and gave non-Muslims newfound rights—originally to appease Western powers, later in emulation of the victorious West. The Ottoman Empire’s Hatt-i Humayun decree of 1856 abolished the *jizya* in many Ottoman-ruled territories. Elsewhere in the Muslim world, the *jizya* was gradually abolished wherever Western powers were present.

Today, however, as Muslims reclaim their Islamic heritage—to the approval and encouragement of the West, now under the spell of “multiculturalism”—both aspects of *jizya* have returned: ransom money must once again be systematically collected from Christians, as the Koran and Sharia law command, or else it is taken by force and bloodshed. Violent depredations on Christians have made a dramatic comeback now that Muslims are once again emulating the earliest years of Islam. As they wage *jihad* to overthrow secular governments, they see Christian minorities as “milk camels” that must pay for their existence by being milked dry.

Consider the words of Sheikh Abu Ishaq al-Huwaini, spoken several years ago, on what the Muslim world can do to overcome its economic problems. The sheikh justified the forced conversion and enslavement of non-Muslims—and held out the *jizya* as an enticement to Muslims to participate:

If only we can conduct a jihadist invasion at least once a year or if possible twice or three times, then many people on earth would become Muslims. And if anyone prevents our *dawa* [invitation to conversion] or stands in our way, then we must kill or take them as hostage and confiscate their wealth, women and children. Such battles will fill the pockets of the Mujahid [holy warrior] who can return home with 3 or 4 slaves, 3 or 4 women and 3 or 4 children. This can be a profitable business if you multiply each head by 300 or 400 dirham. This can be like financial shelter whereby a jihadist, in time of financial need, can always sell one of these heads.¹²³

Spotlight on Iraq

Recent events in Iraq demonstrate what happens to Christian minorities once the jihad is let loose. After Saddam Hussein was overthrown by U.S. forces and a provisional government established, jihadis saw their opportunity and made a putsch for power—unleashing a virulent jihad in Mesopotamia in the name of creating an Islamic emirate. In the context of this new jihad, the paradigm of the earliest years of Islam—when the original Muslim conquerors were consolidating power and building empire with the blood of innocent non-Muslim populations—has returned. As jihadis seek to empower themselves, the lives of Christian minorities who do not pay *jizya* is forfeit. The only way they can redeem themselves is through ransom money—*jizya*, which, as seen above, simply means “compensation” for their lives.

Attacks on Christians began on the heels of Saddam’s fall when jihadis launched a coordinated bombing campaign on Baghdad’s churches in the summer of 2004. Among other atrocities committed since then, beheading and crucifying Christians¹²⁴ are not infrequent occurrences. Threats such as “you Christian dogs, leave or die” are typical.¹²⁵ Jihadis call the church an “obscene nest of pagans” and threaten to “exterminate Iraqi Christians.”¹²⁶ Though Christians make up less than 5 percent of Iraq’s population, they are nearly 40 percent of the refugees fleeing Iraq.¹²⁷ Moreover, according to a December 2009 report by *Aswat al-Iraq* (“Voices of Iraq”), 1,960 Christians were targeted and killed since 2003, the “property of at least 500,000 Christians were taken away and 200,000 Christians were forced to pay extortion money, while dozens others were kidnapped and then released for ransom.”

A 2007 AP report summarizes the situation of Iraq’s Christians in the context of *jizya* and plunder:

Despite the chaos and sectarian violence raging across Baghdad, Farouq Mansour felt relatively safe as a Christian living in a multiethnic neighborhood in the capital. Then, two months ago, al-Qaida gunmen kidnapped him and demanded that his family convert to Islam or pay a \$30,000 ransom.

Two weeks later, he paid up, was released and immediately fled to Syria, joining a mass exodus of Iraq's increasingly threatened Christian minority. "There is no future for us in Iraq," Mansour said.... In the recent violence, residents of the Baghdad neighborhood of Dora said gunmen knocked on the doors of Christian families, demanding they either pay *jizya*—a special tax traditionally levied on non-Muslims—or leave. The *jizya* has not been imposed in Muslim nations in about 100 years [during the colonial era].... In the northern city of Mosul, men began knocking on doors last month, demanding that Christian families pay a \$3,000 tax that would be used to fight the U.S.-led forces, local residents said. Some paid; others fled.¹²⁸

The AP report also alludes to the collective punishment of Iraq's Christians in response to the American invasion: "some Islamic insurgents call Christians 'crusaders' whose real loyalty lies with U.S. troops." Christian persecution increased "after Pope Benedict XVI made comments perceived to be anti-Islam. Church bombings spiked and a priest in the northern city of Mosul was kidnapped and later found beheaded.... Many churches are now nearly empty, with many of their faithful either gone or too scared to attend."

The report also explains how "Criminal gangs made use of the situation and they started to kidnap Christians and demand ransom. It is a coalition between terrorists and criminals." Compare this trend to the aforementioned "dark side of forced conversion to Islam" in Pakistan, which "involves the criminal elements who are engaged in rape and abduction and then justify their heinous crimes by forcing the victims to convert to Islam. The Muslim fundamentalists are happy to offer these criminals shelter and use the excuse that they are providing a great service to their sacred cause of increasing the population of Muslims," according to the Asian Human Rights Commission.

Today, despite the fact that the majority of Iraq's indigenous Christians have fled their homeland, jihadis are still trying "to milk the camel

until it gives no more milk, and until it milks blood,” in the words of Muslim Caliph Suliman Abdul Malik. In May 2011, a Christian youth was abducted and, when his family could not come up with the exorbitant ransom, his Islamic captors beheaded him. “The murder was meant to intimidate Christians so that in the future they will more readily pay ransom demands,” said a source.¹²⁹ Christians cannot expect much help from the authorities. As one Iraqi Christian man put it in December 2010, “Contacting the authorities forces us to identify ourselves, and we aren’t certain that some of the people threatening us aren’t the people in the government offices that are supposed to be protecting us.”¹³⁰

Non-jizya-paying Christians are not merely to be plundered of their money or their lives, but of their loved ones as well, including wives and children. In December 2012, for example, Ayatollah Ahmad al-Hassani al-Baghdadi issued a fatwa on TV, calling Christians “polytheists” and “friends of the Zionists,” and adding that “their women and girls may legitimately be regarded wives of Muslims.”¹³¹

Finally, Iraq’s few remaining Christians are, as is to be expected, being plundered of their faith as well. An October 2011 report titled “the double lives of Iraq’s Christian children” tells of their suffering—“If the children say they believe in Jesus, they face beatings and scorn from their teachers”—as well as the struggle of their parents: “‘The first years of my faith,’ says a father, ‘I brought so many people to church, because I was motivated, so excited.... Now I don’t encourage anyone to be a Christian, because in my experience it is very hard.’”¹³² Indeed, as we have seen, since the seventh century—with a brief respite from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century—it has been “very hard” for Christians to be Christian virtually anywhere in the Islamic world, which is precisely why, over the course of fourteen centuries, Christians in Islamic countries—who originally made half of the world’s Christian population—largely converted to Islam.

Spotlight on Syria

In an ironic twist of fate, large-scale Christian persecution has now come to Syria, which only recently was a primary place of asylum for

Christians fleeing the persecution in Iraq. Because jihadis are involved in trying to overthrow the rule of Bashar Assad—with U.S. support—the same exact pattern of persecution experienced by Iraq’s Christians has come to Syria’s Christians as well. As one top official of the Russian Orthodox Church put it, “We are deeply worried by what is going on in Syria, where radical forces are trying to come to power with the help of Western powers ... *Where they come to power, Christian communities become the first victims*” [emphasis added].¹³³

Thousands of Syrian Christians have fled their homes; entire regions and towns where Christians have lived for centuries, since before Islam came into being, have now been emptied as the Islamist-led opposition intentionally targets Christians—kidnapping, plundering, and beheading at will. In August 2012 a car bomb was detonated in the Christian area of Jaramana, a suburb of Damascus, as “a crowd of faithful, families, elderly people, women and children, were heading to the cemetery to bury two young people. The two had died a day earlier, on August 27, also victims of an IED [improvised explosive device]. As the crowd, after the funeral, was accompanying the deceased to the burial, a taxi exploded causing 12 deaths [according to other sources, twenty-seven], including 5 children, and injuring more than 50 people.” Further, “a family of Armenian Christians was found murdered, and all members of the family horribly decapitated.”¹³⁴

In October 2012 the last Christian in the city of Homs—which had had a Christian population of some 80,000 before jihadi insurgents began targeting them—was murdered.¹³⁵ As one teenage Syrian girl had put it earlier,

We left because they were trying to kill us.... They wanted to kill us because we were Christians. They were calling us Kaf-firs [infidels], even little children saying these things. Those who were our neighbors turned against us. At the end, when we ran away, we went through balconies. We did not even dare go out on the street in front of our house. I’ve kept in touch with the few Christian friends left back home, but I

cannot speak to my Muslim friends any more. I feel very sorry about that.¹³⁶

In August 2012, another Christian girl who escaped only after several of her family were killed, said, “They [Muslim clerics] sermonized on Fridays in the mosques that it was a sacred duty to drive us [Christians] away... Christians had to pay bribes to the jihadists repeatedly in order to avoid getting killed.” After making the sign of the cross, her grandmother added, “Anyone who believes in this cross suffers.”¹³⁷

Indeed, earlier in 2012 it was reported that “Al-Faruq Battalion, which is affiliated with the opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA), is imposing jizya (an extra tax imposed on non-Muslims living under Muslim rule) on Christians in Homs Governorate” and that “armed men ... threaten to kidnap or kill them or members of their families if they refuse to comply”¹³⁸—precisely what has been taking place in next-door Iraq, and precisely what took place over many centuries under Islam.

Compare what is happening to the Christians of Iraq and Syria today to the ceaseless extortion of Christians throughout the centuries:

Nomadic tribes and all the rebels and heads of bands ... satisfied their needs by pillage and ransoming dhimmis.... The chronicles indicate that [Christians] were subject to pillage and violence from rebel or uncontrollable Arab clans.... Whether it be in Armenia, Mesopotamia [Iraq], the Syro-Palestinian region, Egypt, Anatolia [modern-day Turkey], or Spain, details about this endless booty seized from dhimmi villagers fill the chroniclers' pages....¹³⁹

In Syria today, even those trying to flee the plunder-jihad are not immune. A September 2012 report discussed how Christians fleeing to the Lebanese border are being targeted, kidnapped, and in some cases murdered for ransom money. In one instance, “armed gangs,” taking advantage of the chaos of the war, held 280 people hostage. Many of those kidnapped are later found slaughtered or beheaded on the road.¹⁴⁰

A January 2012 report from Barnabas Aid, “Christians in Syria Targeted in Series of Kidnappings and Killings; 100 Dead,” tells how “children were being especially targeted by the kidnappers, who, if they do not receive the ransom demanded, kill the victim.” In one instance, kidnappers videotaped a Christian boy as they murdered him in an attempt to frame the government for the atrocity.¹⁴¹ A Christian man “was cut into pieces and thrown in a river” and another “was found hanged with numerous injuries.”¹⁴²

In October 2012, armed groups from the opposition kidnapped a Greek Orthodox priest, Father Fadi Jamil Haddad. Days later his body, which showed evidence of gruesome torture—with “his eyes gouged out”—was found dumped near the place he was abducted. Earlier “the kidnappers had asked the priest’s family and his church a ransom of 50 million Syrian pounds (over 550 thousand euros)” —a sum that was impossible to raise. A source quoted by Agenzia Fides condemned this “terrible practice, present for months in this dirty war, of kidnapping and then killing innocent civilians.”¹⁴³

In November 2012 more Christians were kidnapped. Two of the victims were young men for whom the kidnappers demanded \$100,000 USD in ransom, per man. A third victim was a seventeen-year-old girl who was taken by four men after they beat her sixteen-year-old brother unconscious. The Assyrian International News Agency reported, “Violence against Assyrians has sharply risen in the last 12 months, much of it perpetrated by the rebel militia, especially by the Jihadist elements of the rebels.”¹⁴⁴

Right around Christmastime in 2012, Islamic rebels beheaded Andrei Arbashe, a thirty-eight-year-old Christian man, and fed his body to dogs. According to Sister Agnes-Mariam, mother superior of the Monastery of St. James the Mutilated, the man’s headless corpse was found by the side of the road, surrounded by hungry dogs. He had recently married and was soon to be a father: “His only crime was his brother criticized the rebels, accused them of acting like bandits, which is what they are.” The nun added, “The free and democratic world is supporting extremists.... They want to impose Sharia Law and create an Islamic state in Syria.... More than 200 families were driven out in the night. People are

afraid. Everywhere the deaths squads stop civilians, abduct them and ask for ransom, sometimes they kill them.”¹⁴⁵

Also in December 2012, Tim Marshall, a Western reporter who was granted the opportunity to interview jihadi rebel fighters captured by the army, had a very telling—or as he called it, “surreal”—conversation with them, touching on the idea that non-Muslims must either pay jizya or convert to Islam. Marshall asked the four jihadis about the future of Syria’s Christian minorities, and

Ahmed, Basah, and Hamid Hassan all agreed—Christians could only live there if they either converted, or paid the “Jizyah”—special tax levied on non-Muslims in previous centuries in the Middle East. If not said Bahar, they could be killed. When asked why, the answer was, to them, quite simple—because the Prophet Muhammad said so. I was then invited to become a Muslim. The conversation verged on the surreal. There we were talking in a quite friendly manner, with the occasional joke, about killing people because they wouldn’t pay the Jizyah, which critics regard as effectively obtaining money through menaces. The interview ended with Ahmed volunteering that eventually Muslims must reclaim Andalusia in Spain for the Islamic Caliphate. His logic, that it was justified because Spain used to be under Islam, was somewhat undermined when he went on to say that Islam should move on to bring the UK under its control and indeed, eventually, the whole world. Rebel fighters want an end to President Assad’s regime. This was a rare first-hand glimpse into the jihadi mindset.... As the men left to go back to their cells, we shook hands. Two of them were still trying to convert me, asking me, with a smile, to say the Shahada ‘La ilaha il Allah’—there is no God but Allah.¹⁴⁶

Spotlight on Egypt

Iraq and Syria are seeing the return of the violence of the chaotic years of early Islam, when plundering Christians of their money and lives was

commonplace. This phenomenon has also returned to Egypt and Pakistan, where oppressing Christians is a way of life.

In September 2011 Abu Shadi, a Salafi leader, announced that Egypt's Christians "must either convert to Islam, pay jizya, or prepare for war." Weeks earlier, in June 2011, a priest had narrowly escaped being "killed at the hands of the Salafis because of his refusal to pay them jizya money.... [T]he church's priest had declared that the Copts would not pay jizya, in any way, shape, or form. This is what caused the Salafis to want to banish him from the region, so they could collect jizya from the Copts."¹⁴⁷

Nor are calls for jizya limited to Salafi radicals. Earlier, in 2009, Dr. Amani Tawfiq, a female professor at Egypt's Mansoura University, said, "If Egypt wants to slowly but surely get out of its economic situation and address poverty in the country, the Jizya has to be imposed on the Copts."¹⁴⁸ In September 2011, Dr. Mohamed Saad Katatni, the secretary general of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, reportedly said that "Copts would not pay jizya now," implying that the idea of collecting tribute from subdued "dhimmi" Christians is very much alive among the Brotherhood, only dormant till a more opportune moment.¹⁴⁹

In the meantime, because jizya is not being exacted by the state, many Muslims deem it their right to plunder Christians, as in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere. In fact, this has been going on since the 1970s, when al-Gama'a al Islamiyya (the Islamic Group) issued fatwas legitimizing the plundering of Christian homes and businesses in Egypt, in lieu of jizya.¹⁵⁰

Since the "Arab Spring" began, several human rights reports have appeared indicating that roaming gangs of Muslims are intentionally targeting Egypt's Christians and holding them for ransom. The stories follow the same pattern: a Christian is kidnapped; his or her family is contacted and told to pay an exorbitant sum, usually more than they can possibly come up with; and police do nothing.¹⁵¹ A report by the Arabic-language news outlet Alkhbar entitled "After Dahshur, Jizya Imposed on Copts in Asyut" tells how "hundreds of Christians gathered before the Asyut Security Directorate in Manfalut Municipality, demanding that

police protect them, their children, and houses from a gang attacking their homes and imposing tributes on them.”¹⁵²

In January 2012 two Christians, a father and son, were killed “after a Muslim racketeer opened fire on them for refusing to pay him extortion money.” The local bishop “hold[s] security forces and local Muslims fully responsible for terrorizing the Copts living there.... who are continuously being subjected to terror and kidnapping.”¹⁵³ In March 2012 Muslims abducted Fadel Rushdie, a Christian youth, and went on to contact his family demanding a large sum of money. Police failed to react.¹⁵⁴

And in August 2012, Islamists in Egypt’s Constituent Assembly attempted to extend the extortion to the law, demanding that the Coptic Church’s funds be placed under the Islamist-led government’s financial control—a measure categorically rejected by Copts. The Egyptian state in no way funds the Coptic Church, even though taxpayers—including Christians—fund mosques. Condemning the proposal, the acting patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church at the time said the demand has only one meaning: “that Copts are clearly persecuted.”¹⁵⁵

The displacement of Coptic Christians has become an ongoing crisis, so much so that a recent statement by the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt lamented the “repeated incidents of displacement of Copts from their homes, whether by force or threat.... Displacements began in Amiriyah, then they stretched to Dahshur, and today terror and threats have reached the hearts and souls of our Coptic children in Rafah [Sinai]”—all regions which saw Muslim mobs drive out Christian minorities and seize their property, often as collective punishment for individual Christians’ purported transgressions against Sharia.¹⁵⁶

Spotlight on Pakistan

It is the same for Pakistan’s harried Christian minority. Anecdotes of Christians being abducted and held for ransom abound; a great many of them concern the hundreds of females abducted and raped. For example, in August 2011 Shaheen Bibi, a forty-year-old Christian mother of seven children, “was kidnapped, raped, sold into marriage and threatened with death” if she did not convert to Islam. Because she resisted, her Islamic

abductors contacted her father and demanded 100,000 rupees in exchange for the woman's freedom.¹⁵⁷

Of course when it comes to extorting money from Christians, women are not the only targets. An August 2009 report from the Indian Daily News & Analysis website states that "eight members of the minority Christian community have been kidnapped in Pakistan's troubled Waziristan tribal region. . . . There have been several instances of members of minority communities being abducted for ransom or forced to pay *jiziya* [*sic*], a tax levied on non-Muslims."¹⁵⁸

It is the same elsewhere in Pakistan, not just in jihadi-infested regions. In August 2012 *Agenzia Fides*, reporting the murder of a Christian youth by Muslims in Karachi—the largest city and financial center of Pakistan—said, "Christians are harassed by criminal gangs and Islamic terrorist groups of ethnic Pashtuns: armed to the teeth, the militants enter the area to collect the 'Jizya.' . . . Militants raid houses, steal and abuse women and children for fun. The local population is terrorized."¹⁵⁹

In July 2009, a Christian businessman driving through Lahore was "shot eight times in the legs" for refusing to pay extortion money to a Muslim. Apparently envious of the Christian's wealth, the Muslim approached him and said, "'You now have three cars, so give me \$3,750. You are a wealthy Christian, so it is my right to get as much money as I need from you. If you don't give it to me, I will kill you.'" When the victim's brothers went to file a report at the police station, they were harassed and delayed. Although the police know the identity of the "jizya-collecting" Muslim, they took no action.¹⁶⁰

In October 2011, Muslims raided a Christian home, beat a sick father and abducted two brothers, who they say owe them money—to which supposed debt the kidnappers added an additional 70,000 rupees in ransom. "The men's mother tried to file a report with police, which refused because one of the suspects is a fellow police officer"—not to mention, a fellow Muslim.¹⁶¹

In March 2012, Muslims abducted "two Christian hospital employees in Karachi." A senior investigator said, "'Such cases are on the rise, as banned Islamist groups and other criminal gangs are turning to

kidnappings for ransom in order to survive and procure weapons and ammunition.”¹⁶²

Pakistan’s despised Christians have also been robbed of land with impunity. In October 2011 one man was killed and “two dozen Christians including children, men and women were seriously injured” when an influential Muslim hired Muslims who attacked the Christians “to grab a piece of land bought for a social project”—land that the church had purchased to build an orphanage.¹⁶³

Two months later, in December 2011, during another attempted landgrab, Muslim police and the associates of a retired military official beat two Christian women with “batons and punches,” inflicting a serious wound on one of the women’s eyes, and opened fire on Christians who came to the aid of the attacked women, all because the women had dared to speak up in defense of their land. “In the last few years Muslims have made several attempts to seize the land from the Christians, usually succeeding because Christians are a marginalized minority,” reported World Watch Monitor.¹⁶⁴

Elsewhere around the Islamic world Christians are being forced to ransom their lives with money. For example, in Islamist Sudan in January 2012, “after a large truck smashed through the gates of the St. Josephine Bakhita’s Catholic Church compound,” Muslims affiliated with Sudan’s Islamic government kidnapped two Catholic priests, “severely beat” them, and “looted their living quarters, stealing two vehicles, two laptops and a safe.” Later the kidnappers forced the priests to call their bishop with a ransom demand of 500,000 Sudanese pounds (US \$185,530).¹⁶⁵

The jizya-jihad has even reached the West. In March 2012, in a Muslim ghetto in Copenhagen, an African refugee was threatened by a group of “youths” who repeatedly kicked his door in, accused him of being “both black and Christian,” and tried to extort money from him. Police said they could not guarantee his safety, and he was eventually found “in tears” living in the streets.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, in December 2012, another gang of “youths” attacked the Holy Cross Church in the heart of the Nørrebro

area of Copenhagen, demanding money because it was “in their territory.” Nørrebro has a significant Muslim population.¹⁶⁷

Islamic attempts to collect jizya are no longer limited to the Christian minorities under Islam. In 2002, Saudi Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Rahman, discussing the prophet’s prediction that Islam will one day conquer Rome, said, “We will control the land of the Vatican; we will control Rome and introduce Islam in it. Yes, the Christians ... will yet pay us the Jiziya [*sic*], in humiliation, or they will convert to Islam.”¹⁶⁸

According to other Muslim leaders, the West is already paying jizya, by way of welfare benefits. For example, in February 2013, Anjem Choudary, an Islamic cleric and popular preacher in the United Kingdom, was secretly taped telling a Muslim audience to follow his example and get “Jihad Seeker’s Allowance” from the government—a pun on “Job Seeker’s Allowance.” The father of four, who receives more than 25,000 pounds annually in welfare benefits, referred to British taxpayers as “slaves,” adding, “We take the jizya, which is our *haq* [Arabic for “right”], anyway. The normal situation by the way is to take money from the *kafir* [infidel], isn’t it? So this is the normal situation. They give us the money—you work, give us the money, Allahu Akhbar. We take the money. Hopefully there’s no one from the DSS [Department of Social Security] listening to this.”¹⁶⁹

PIOUS MUSLIMS, PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Muslim hostility toward non-Muslims often occurs in connection with Muslim piety. For instance, a great many of the above anecdotes, particularly the mob attacks on churches, occurred on Friday—the Muslim equivalent of Sunday for Christians. Friday is the one day of the week that Muslims go to mosque, engage in communal prayers, and listen to a sermon. It is also the one day that Christians and others are most likely to be attacked, thanks to sermons which habitually incite Muslims against religious minorities. The significance of these Friday attacks can be best understood by analogy: What if Christians were especially violent

and intolerant toward non-Christians on Sundays, right after leaving church service? What would that say about Christianity? What does it say about Islam?

Consider the fact that Ramadan—Islam’s holiest month, when Muslims are expected to fast during daylight hours and pay special attention to their religious duties—typically sees some of the worst attacks on religious minorities, usually in revenge for their not “knowing their place.”

On August 8, 2011, after breaking their Ramadan fast in the evening, thousands of Muslims rampaged through a predominantly Christian village in Egypt, firing automatic weapons and throwing Molotov cocktails at Coptic homes. They intentionally targeted and beat the village priest, plundering and torching his home. Another Copt was murdered in his home, which was also ransacked.¹⁷⁰ Separately, seven Muslims savagely attacked yet another Christian in front of a police station; he lost one eye and required twenty stitches in his head. Muslims sexually harassed girls leaving church and also hurled stones at the church, shattering five windows.¹⁷¹ This particular attack, like the Maspero Massacre, was prompted by the fact that the Christians had had the audacity to stage a protest—in this case, against the fact that Muslims were targeting Christian girls for abuse.

On July 27, 2012, a diabetic man in Egypt was driving his car when he was struck with great thirst, “which he could not bear” (a side-effect of diabetes, further exacerbated by Egypt’s July weather). He pulled over by a public water source and started drinking water. Soon three passersby approached him, inquiring why he was drinking water (which is forbidden to Muslims during daylight in Ramadan). The diabetic replied, “Because I am a Christian, and sick,” to which they exclaimed, “You’re a Christian, too!” and begun beating him mercilessly. Other passersby began to congregate to see what was happening, but no one intervened on behalf of the diabetic Christian until he managed to make a dash for his parked car and fled the scene.

Also in Egypt, on July 30, 2012, a young Christian doctor, Maher Rizkalla Ghali, was shot by neighboring Muslims, including easily-identifiable

Salafis, resulting in the loss of an eye, because he had had the temerity to ask them to keep the noise down for the sake of “children and the elderly”—the Muslims had been rioting and shooting guns in the air to celebrate after sundown in Ramadan. Their response was to “insult his religion” and open fire at him, partially blinding him and severely disfiguring his face. Then they went into full mob mode and tried to break through the door of his home to plunder it. Although the family filed a police report, “security forces have not taken any action towards the perpetrators.” In addition, this gravely wounded Christian doctor was denied admission to several hospitals.¹⁷²

It is the same for Christians during Ramadan from one end of the Muslim world to the other. Far to the east, in Pakistan, on July 29, 2012, eleven Christian student nurses were “allegedly poisoned with mercury in their tea,” likely as “punishment” for drinking a beverage during the month of Ramadan while their Muslim colleagues were fasting.¹⁷³ Far to the west, in Algeria in August 2012, a Christian Lebanese singer was arrested for smoking in public and “failing to show due respect to Muslims.” She was released after police warned her that “she was not allowed to smoke in public during Ramadan in Muslim Algeria, even though she was a Christian.”¹⁷⁴

Ironically, almost every year, stories appear in the Western news about Christmas decorations on public property being suppressed, at least in part to accommodate Muslim sensitivities.¹⁷⁵ But in the Muslim world, during the major Muslim holy season of the year, Christians themselves are being suppressed to accommodate Muslim sensitivities.



PART FIVE

SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

We have now surveyed hundreds of documented stories of Christian persecution under Islam—the overwhelming majority of which have taken place in just the last few years. To cover and document the amount of persecution Christians have experienced across the Muslim world in only the last few decades would require volumes.

We have also seen the distinctly Islamic nature of these attacks—whether they are literally rooted in Islam’s teachings, such as the attacks on churches that follow from Islamic rules forbidding them to be built; or whether they are cultural byproducts of Islamic supremacism and contempt for Christians, such as the double standards in the courtroom, and even widespread rape and murder. The same exact patterns of persecution are evident from one end of the Islamic world to the other—in lands that do not share the same language, race, or culture—*that share*

only Islam. This fact alone leaves no doubt concerning the root source of such persecution. Whether they arise out of doctrine or culture, all the forms of persecution we have surveyed are rooted in the Sharia—the “Islamic way.”

And yet the question remains: Why is this humanitarian crisis so little known, and even less acted upon, by the West—the West, which not only champions humanitarianism, but reportedly has a large Christian population, especially in America? Why do Americans persist in believing that each new atrocity against Christians in the Muslim world is somehow an anomaly—an exception to the rule of tolerance that is presumed to prevail in Islam?

At the beginning of this book we briefly touched on some reasons for the modern West’s ignorance about Muslim persecution of Christians. It is understandable that memories of the colonial period and its immediate aftermath—which, after all, are really not that long ago—would lull Americans and other Westerners into assuming that the natural state of affairs for Muslims is to coexist peacefully with Christians. Or at least it would be understandable—if not for the enormous weight of recent evidence demonstrating Muslim abuse of Christians wherever Islam holds sway, and even wherever Muslims are a majority of the population. Surely anyone who pays attention to recent events in Muslim nations must quickly clue in to the fact that the “Golden Age” of Christianity in the Islamic world is long gone.

Apparently not.

What is keeping our ideas about the status of Christians in the Muslim world from catching up to the reality on the ground?

A large part of the explanation is that three enormously influential institutions in the West have skewed the story. Western academia, Western media, and Western governments—in different ways, to different degrees, and at different times—have all refused to acknowledge what Christians are suffering at the hands of Muslims. This is in keeping with their reluctance to recognize that Islam itself is the cause of this persecution.

ACADEMIA: WHITEWASHING ISLAM, BLAMING THE WEST

Islam has been whitewashed by Western professors in Western universities. The picture of Muslims and of Islam that trickles down from the scholarly establishment to textbooks and lesson plans across America is flattering but false. Objective history and primary texts have been jettisoned and replaced with a revisionist history that has little grounding in reality. In the politically correct narrative that holds sway in Western institutions of learning, the Christian West is always the oppressor—from the Crusades through colonialism to the present—and the Islamic world is the noble victim.

For an example of how American academics see Islam and its history through rose-colored glasses, consider the way the medieval Islamic leader Saladin has been so thoroughly whitewashed and held up as a counterexample to help demonize Christians. According to one esteemed American historian, “When we contrast with this [the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem] the conduct of Saladin when he captured Jerusalem from the Christians in 1187, we have a striking illustration of the difference between the two civilizations and realize what the Christians might learn from contact with the Saracens [Muslims] in the Holy Land.” Note the present tense: “might learn.” Saladin—a hero for al-Qaeda¹—is being held up in the West as an example from whom “intolerant” Christians today need to learn. Another historian wrote that Saladin was “unusually merciful for his time. He allowed the Crusaders who entered it [Jerusalem] in a bloodbath, to leave the city in peace.”²

Such historians habitually neglect to mention the political exigencies of the situation, which prompted Saladin’s apparent mercy—just as they fail to mention that in the Muslim lands where he was in absolute power, Saladin’s “mercy” expressed itself in commands to break the crosses from atop the domes of churches, to cover church buildings with black mud, and to crucify Christians.³ Saladin’s retirement wish—to pursue the same Crusaders he supposedly pardoned “until there shall not remain on the

face of this earth one unbeliever in God [Allah], or I will die in the attempt”—is also conveniently omitted from the story, as it detracts from the narrative of the magnanimous Muslim.⁴

This kind of revisionist history—painting Christianity and Western civilization as inherently violent, playing up those rare incidents in which Muslim rulers can be made to appear tolerant and merciful, and omitting to mention the vastly more numerous cases in which they were intolerant and cruel—has obvious political ramifications: the modern-day West must appease and make concessions to the Islamic world to atone for its own sins, and not repeat the mistakes of the Crusaders by again being critical or mistrusting of Muslims, from whom the West can learn tolerance. This is the attitude toward Islam among the West’s elite—from the highest echelons of academia on down. Those who get scholarships, grants, and positions (many of them funded by Saudi petro dollars)—in other words, those on their way to a future in the academic world—employ intellectual acrobatics to portray the Islamic world as tolerant, victimized, wonderful to its religious minorities, and so forth. Having been both a graduate student at Georgetown University’s Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and an employee at the African and Middle Eastern Division of the Library of Congress, I have had direct personal experience of the bias that skews the academic study of Islam in the West.

THE MEDIA: OBSCURING THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

The whitewashing of Islam that began in academia naturally metastasized to the media and Hollywood. One can list any number of supposedly “historical” movies—*Kingdom of Heaven* is one recent example—that contrast noble and magnanimous Muslims with intolerant, fanatical, and greedy Christians. Such movies accurately portray only the Western self-loathing that became popular in the 1970s—the same self-loathing that helped drive Muslims back to the Islamic way. These movies turn history on its head. *Agora*, for example, a movie set in pre-Islamic fourth-century Egypt, at the time when Christianity was becom-

ing the dominant religion, portrays pagans as tolerant and open-minded, and Christians as indoctrinated and intolerant brutes who have long beards, dress in black, and roam the streets terrorizing and murdering anyone who disagrees with them. The “Christians” in the movie are in fact a perfect depiction of Egypt’s modern-day Salafi Muslims, who wear long beards, dress in white tunics, and roam in bands, terrorizing those who disagree with them—Christian Copts at the top of the list. In other words, at a time when Egypt’s Christians are being persecuted, Hollywood’s response is to produce a movie portraying Egyptian Christians as the persecutors.

The newsrooms of the mainstream media are sometimes little better than Hollywood. Most of the reporting being done on persecuted Christians is not from the larger media outlets, but rather from dedicated journalists—including volunteers—and smaller media agencies who understand the situation and who care more about reporting the facts than about being politically correct. To some extent it is natural that smaller media specialize in covering Christian persecution. The major newspapers, wire services, and TV networks cannot be expected to focus exclusively on this one phenomenon, but rather must take all world events into consideration, highlighting the ones that seem the most important (and get the most attention, and sell the most advertising). But even given these constraints, by and large mainstream-media journalists have been woefully negligent in their reporting.

Otherwise it would be impossible for me to break stories in the Western press, as I often do, simply by translating from Arabic-language media sources the sorts of stories that the mainstream media ignore. I have already mentioned the story about Saudi Arabia’s Grand Mufti’s assertion that it is “necessary to destroy all the churches” in the Arabian Peninsula. His claim was reported in the Arabic media where Western reporters habitually pick up their stories. But they did not seem interested in reporting on this one. As I pointed out at the time that I broke the story in the English-language press, “I have not seen this story, already some three days old, translated on any English news source, though ‘newsworthy’ stories are often translated in mere hours.”⁵ Many media outlets, including Fox News, subsequently picked up my translation.

When the story did break into the mainstream, many wondered at the delay, asking how such a big story could have been ignored. As Clifford D. May, writing on National Review Online, put it,

Imagine if Pat Robertson called for the demolition of all the mosques in America. It would be front-page news. It would be on every network and cable-news program. There would be a demand for Christians to denounce him, and denounce him they would—in the harshest terms. The president of the United States and other world leaders would weigh in, too. Rightly so.

So why is it that when Abdulaziz ibn Abdullah Al al-Sheikh, the grand mufti of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, declares that it is “necessary to destroy all the churches in the Arabian Peninsula,” the major media do not see this as even worth reporting? ...

This should be emphasized: Al al-Sheikh is not the Arabian equivalent of some backwoods Florida pastor. He is the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia....

None of this might have come to light at all had it not been for Raymond Ibrahim, the Shillman fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center and an associate fellow at the Middle East Forum. He was the first to call attention to the grand mufti’s remarks, based on reports from three Arabic-language websites....⁶

Other times, not only do the mainstream media fail to report on major stories that otherwise put Islam in a negative light, they even attempt to suppress those stories. For instance, when I exposed how growing numbers of clerics were calling for the “demolition of Egypt’s Great Pyramids,”⁷ in light of the election of Muslim Brotherhood leader Muhammad Morsi to the presidency of Egypt, the *New York Times* and the *Huffington Post* responded by portraying my report as a hoax. In fact I had translated from legitimate Arabic-language sources, and

the mainstream outlets never offered any meaningful rebutting evidence. They just held the story up to ridicule.⁸ And while it may be difficult to believe in the destruction of the pyramids, the fact is, at the time of this writing, other less massive ancient Egyptian artifacts are quietly being targeted and destroyed by Salafis seeking to purge Egypt of idolatry—in accordance with Islam’s teachings and the prophet’s actions.⁹

The possible destruction of antiquities is not the only—or even the most important—story that the Western mainstream media miss, distort, or get completely wrong. Consider the recent and ongoing wars in Sudan and Lebanon. In both cases, Muslim supremacists were—and are—trying to convert, subjugate, or wipe out Christians. (It is not for nothing that Samuel Huntington observed in his *Clash of Civilizations* that “Islam’s borders are bloody, and so are its innards.”)¹⁰ Though religion is the primary cause of both conflicts, reports in the mainstream media focus on more peripheral factors, especially on economic ones, to explain the violence.

Worst of all, however, is when the media in the West not only obscures the suffering of Christians under Islam, but also even demonizes these victims of Muslim persecution. For example, Robert Fisk, the well-known Middle East correspondent for the U.K.’s widely read *Independent*, recently demonstrated why Islamic jihadis, including the late Osama bin Laden, have recommended his writings to Western readers.¹¹

In a June 4, 2012, article discussing the turmoil in Egypt and Syria, Fisk actually blamed the abused Christian minorities of those two countries for supporting those secularist leaders most likely to protect their lives. For instance he scoffed at how Egyptian presidential candidate “Ahmed Shafiq, the Mubarak loyalist, has the support of the Christian Copts, and [Syrian President] Assad has the support of the Syrian Christians. The Christians support the dictators. Not much of a line, is it?”¹²

In Fisk’s naïve way of thinking, Sharia-pushing Muslims are patriotic freedom-lovers, and the local Christians are unpatriotic freedom-haters for refusing to support their movement. Truly, “not much of a line, is it?” Completely missing from Fisk’s narrative is why Christians in Egypt

supported Shafiq, and why Christians in Syria would rather see the secularist Assad remain in power: because the alternatives—jihad-supporting Islamists seeking to enforce Sharia law—have been making their lives a living hell.

Fisk's biased narrative was not, of course, original to him. It originates with the Islamists themselves, who, bemoaning the secularist Shafiq's good showing in the presidential election, laid the blame on Egypt's Christian Copts for coming out in large numbers to vote for him. Tarek al-Zomor, a prominent figure of the Islamic Group al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya—the terrorist organization that slaughtered fifty-eight European tourists, including several of Fisk's countrymen, during the 1997 Luxor Massacre—"demanded an apology from the Copts" for voting for Shafiq, which he called a "fatal error."

The uncritical Fisk followed suit, portraying the Middle East's Christians as traitors. Yet back in the real world, it was obvious why Egyptian Copts did not vote for the candidate from the Muslim Brotherhood. As one Coptic activist put it: "Did they [complaining Islamists] really expect a Christian to choose a president to represent him from those who cut off the ear of a Christian, blocked the railways in objection to the appointment of a Christian governor in Qena, burn down several churches and who are diligently working to write a Constitution which undermines the rights of Christians?"¹³

Even secular Muslim writer Khaled Montasser, in an article titled "The Muslim Brotherhood Asks Why Christians Fear Them?!", pointed out that the Brotherhood's own official documents and fatwas decree anti-Christian measures, including the destruction of churches and the prevention of burying Christian "infidels" near Muslim graves. Little wonder that Christians did not vote for the Muslim Brotherhood's Muhammad Morsi, but rather for the secular Shafiq—they naturally did not support a platform that called for their own persecution.

In Syria, as we have seen, Islamist-led opposition forces have been terrorizing, murdering, and plundering the nation's Christian minority and promising to enforce full Sharia if and when they overthrow Assad. Is it surprising that many Syrian Christians hope to see Assad prevail?

The *Independent's* Middle East foreign correspondent has apparently missed all these “subtleties.” Instead Fisk bemoaned how those in Washington who support secular rulers “will want to pump up Christian fears and frighten the West with the awfulness of ‘Muslim fundamentalism.’”¹⁴

Yet even the mainstream media, ordinarily pretty blasé about “the awfulness of ‘Muslim fundamentalism,’” does report on the very worst anecdotes of Christian persecution under Islam. Those stories, such as the October 2010 Baghdad church massacre, which saw some fifty-eight Christians killed, are simply too spectacular to ignore. All too often, however, while they report the bare-bones facts of the actual persecution, they distort the context in which it occurs, sustaining an aura of moral relativism that minimizes the role of Muslims—and certainly the role of Islam—in causing the violence. Unprovoked Muslim attacks on Christians are portrayed as “sectarian strife,” a phrase that conjures the image of two equally matched adversaries—equally abused, and equally abusive. This hardly describes reality: Christian minorities being persecuted in Muslim-majority nations.

The headlines alone say it all. For example, the New Year’s Eve Coptic church attack that left some twenty-eight dead did receive prominent coverage, but under odd headlines: “Clashes Grow as Egyptians Remain Angry after an Attack,” was the *New York Times* headline, while “Christians clash with police in Egypt after attack on churchgoers kills 21” was the *Washington Post's*—as if frustrated and harried Christians lashing out against their persecutors is the big news, not the persecution itself; as if their angry reaction to an unprovoked attack somehow evens everything up.¹⁵

Blurring the line between the victim and oppressor is a regular tactic of the mainstream media, especially when it comes to reporting on Muslim persecution of Christians. This is especially apparent in Boko Haram’s genocidal jihad on Nigeria’s Christians. For example, a February 2012 BBC report on a church attack that left three Christians dead, including a toddler, stated the bare-bones facts in its first two sentences and immediately jumped to the apparently really important news: that “the bombing sparked a riot by Christian youths, with reports that at least two

Muslims were killed in the violence. The two men were dragged off their bikes after being stopped at a roadblock set up by the rioters, police said. A row of Muslim-owned shops was also burned. . . . ” The report goes on and on, with a special section about “very angry” Christians, until one all but confuses victims with persecutors, forgetting what the Christians are “very angry” about in the first place: unprovoked and nonstop terror attacks on their churches, and the unprovoked murders of their community’s women and small children.¹⁶

Similarly, the *Los Angeles Times* deemed it newsworthy to report the aforementioned story of the Egyptian off-duty police officer who boarded a train, identified Copts, and then opened fire on them while screaming “Allahu Akbar”—but only to exonerate him (and Islam), as is clear from the report’s headline: “Eyewitness claims train attacker did not target Copts, state media say”¹⁷—the same state media that habitually white-washes the oppression of Egypt’s Christians.

A February 2012 NPR report titled “In Egypt, Christian-Muslim Tension is on the Rise” does fairly report on some stories, but still leaves readers with more questions than answers: “In Egypt, growing tensions between Muslims and Christians have led to sporadic violence [Initiated by whom?]. Many Egyptians blame the interreligious strife on hooligans [Who are they? What is their motivation?] taking advantage of absent or weak security forces. Others believe it’s because of a deep-seated mistrust between Muslims and the minority Christian community [What are the sources of this mistrust? Is it reasonable for Christians to mistrust Muslims?].” The photo accompanying the story is of a group of angry Christians, one defiantly holding a cross aloft—not of Muslims destroying crosses, which is what prompts Christians to such displays of religious solidarity.¹⁸

Media also dissemble the jihadis’ otherwise obvious motivation. For example, a March 2012 Agence France-Presse (AFP) report describing Boko Haram’s many attacks on Christians and officials concludes with the following sentence: “Violence blamed on the sect [Boko Haram], *whose goals remain largely unclear*, has since 2009 claimed more than 1,000 lives, including more than 300 this year alone [emphasis added].”¹⁹

In fact Boko Haram has been bellowing its quite straightforward goals since at least 2007. They want to enforce Sharia law and to subjugate (if not eliminate) Nigeria's Christians.²⁰ And yet here is the venerable Agence France-Presse claiming ignorance about the Islamist group's motivations. One would have thought that a decade after the jihadi attacks of 9/11—a decade in which images from all around the world of Muslims in militant attire shouting distinctly Islamic slogans such as “Allahu Akbar!” and calling for Sharia law and the subjugation of “infidels” became practically ubiquitous—reporters would know by now what the motivations of such Islamic organizations are.

Yet another *New York Times* report, one that appeared on December 25, 2011—the day after Boko Haram bombed several churches during Christmas Eve services, leaving some forty dead—is a good example of how the media refracts reality through the approved paradigm of political correctness, minimizing or ignoring Muslim persecution of Christians around the world (lest reporters should appear to side with Christians), while always putting the best spin on Muslim violence (lest they should appear critical of Islam).

The *New York Times* declares,

The sect, known as Boko Haram, *until now* mostly targeted the police, government and military in its insurgency effort, but the bombings on Sunday *represented a new, religion-tinged front*, a tactic that threatens to exploit the already frayed relations between Nigeria's nearly evenly split populations of Christians and Muslims. [Emphasis added.]²¹

This is absurd. Boko Haram had been terrorizing Nigerian Christians, killing them, and destroying their churches—all in the name of Islam—for several years before these Christmas Eve bombings. As a matter of fact, on the previous Christmas, December 25, 2010, Boko Haram bombed several churches, killing thirty-eight Christians.²² The *New York Times*'s characterization of these latest attacks as “represent[ing] a new, religion-tinged front” is not only inaccurate but unconscionable.

Moreover, the assertion that there are “already frayed relations between Nigeria’s nearly evenly split populations of Christians and Muslims” suggests that both camps are equally motivated by religious hostility. But where are the Christian terror organizations that bomb mosques in Nigeria every Friday to screams of “God is Great”? They simply do not exist.

The report goes on to offer more well-worn canards, including the suggestion that the Nigerian government’s “heavy-handed” response to the terrorists is responsible for their terror: “Critics of the government campaign against Boko Haram say that the effort has not only failed but has increased the sect’s appeal, because the security forces’ heavy-handed tactics have given it new sympathizers.”

The *Times* even manages to insert another favorite meme of the mainstream media—the poverty-causes-terrorism myth: “The sect’s attacks have been further bolstered by festering economic resentment in the impoverished and relatively neglected north, which has an exploding birthrate, low levels of literacy and mass unemployment.” This despite all the evidence that many of the most notorious Islamic terrorists are well educated and come from wealthy families, including Osama bin Laden and Dr. Ayman Zawahiri, the current head of al-Qaeda—and that the terrorists’ Christian victims are often worse off than they are.

As for those who fail to tout the party line on Islam, the mainstream media has resorted to ostracizing them. For example, in January 2011, the *Washington Post*’s “On Faith” blog posted an article dealing with Muslim-Christian relations, in light of recent attacks on Christians in the Muslim world. Regular contributors were invited to respond. The response of Willis E. Eliot, a retired dean of exploratory programs at New York Seminary, was rejected. Up till then, Eliot had been published on that blog almost weekly for over three years. This was his first contribution to be rejected in all that time.

What caused the *Washington Post* to reject his submission? The nonagenarian Eliot had written frankly about the roots of Islamic violence in Islamic theology:

Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” Islam, to the contrary, is essentially hostile to “the infidels” ... Jesus was anti-violent, Muhammad was violent ... Muslims become violent, or threaten violence, when they feel offended: when we Christians feel offended, almost never do we become violent, and almost always we suffer the disrespect in silence.²³

Eliot’s observations are borne out by Muslim and Christian scriptures, by history, and by current affairs. But they go against the one unwavering dogma to which the mainstream media clings—moral and cultural relativism. Hence the need to suppress them.

No doubt the editors of “On Faith” were expecting the usual boilerplate responses on the subject of Muslim attacks on Christians in the Muslim world: acknowledge their existence, yes, but be quick to revert to the usual narrative—that Muslim violence is anything but a byproduct of Islamic indoctrination. That is essentially how most other contributors responded: one found Christian fundamentalism as troubling as Muslim fundamentalism; another bemoaned how scriptures can incite violence, while being careful not to mention any particular religion or scripture; yet another counseled suffering Christians to “turn the other cheek” and forgive their persecutors, cloyingly adding that all violence “can be overcome with our radical love”—easy sentiments to preach while safe in distant America.²⁴

In short, while the mainstream media may report a few facts from the most spectacular incidences of Christian persecution, they employ an arsenal of semantic games, key phrases, convenient omissions, and moral relativism to uphold a narrative first forged by virulently anti-Western academics in the 1960s and 1970s: that Muslim violence and intolerance are products of anything and everything—poverty, political and historical grievances, or territorial disputes—except Islam.

There is, of course, one reason why the mainstream media is reticent to report objectively on Christian persecution under Islam. Of all forms of Islamic violence, the abuse of Christians where Muslims are in power has the capacity to completely undermine the liberal narrative that has

dominated politics for decades. Muslim violence in Europe or against Israel poses no challenge to that narrative: in both cases, Muslims are seen as the underdogs, who may be sympathized with no matter how much they lash out. They may be screaming and rioting, firing rockets, and destroying property—all while calling for the death and destruction of the “infidel” West or Israel’s Jews to cries of “Allahu Akbar!” Still, this bloodlust can be portrayed as a natural byproduct of the frustration Muslims feel as an oppressed minority, “rightfully” angry with the “colonial” West and its Israeli proxy.

But if Muslims get a free pass when their violence is directed against those currently stronger than themselves, how does one reason away their violence when it is directed against those who are weaker than they are, those who have no political influence whatsoever—in this case, the millions of Christians suffering under Islam? The rationalizations used to minimize Muslim violence against the West and Israel simply cannot work here, for now Muslims are the majority—and *they* are the ones violent and oppressive to their minorities, in ways that make Western and Israeli treatment of Muslims seem enviable.

In other words, Christian persecution is perhaps the most obvious example of a phenomenon the mainstream media wants to ignore out of existence—Islamic supremacism. Vastly outnumbered and politically marginalized Christians in the Islamic world simply wish to worship in peace, and yet they still are hounded and attacked; their churches are burned and destroyed; their children are kidnapped, raped, and enslaved. These Christians are often identical to their Muslim co-citizens in race, ethnicity, national identity, culture, and language; there is generally no political or property dispute on which the violence can be blamed. The only problem is that *they are Christian*—they are the *other*—and so they must be subjugated, according to Sharia’s position for all others; for all *infidels*, including Israel and the West.

If the mainstream media were to report honestly on the persecution of Christians under Islam, the obvious implications that Islam is dangerously hostile to *all* non-Muslims would be inescapable. Hence, journalists develop an instinct—or make a deliberate choice—to ignore or minimize these uncomfortable facts. No wonder so many Americans, including

most self-professed Christians, are either totally unaware of the phenomenon or have no idea of its extent or significance.

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION: ENABLING THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

The American public is largely at the mercy of the mainstream media when it comes to information about events in the Muslim world. But what does one make of the actions of the United States government, which has access to the best intelligence available? In both words and actions, the Obama administration has not only ignored Muslim persecution of Christians, but also actually enabled it.

While the plight of Christians under Islam has never been a burning issue for earlier U.S. administrations, there were some valid reasons for this. As we have seen, Christian persecution under Islam, though ancient, is also relatively “new” in the modern era—returning in earnest around the 1970s and progressively getting worse. It would obviously take Western governments some time to acknowledge and adjust to the new reality on the ground. And while today a number of humanitarian organizations report on the reality of Christian suffering in Muslim lands, such information was largely unavailable in earlier years, or at least much more difficult to access—even for the intelligence community. There was no Internet.

These excuses obviously do not apply to the current Obama administration. The situation of Christians in the Muslim world has become much worse, even as Western intelligence has become much better. But not only has the administration ignored the increasingly obvious plight of Christians under Islam, Obama’s wholesale support for the “Arab Spring” has thoroughly empowered those Muslim forces especially hostile to Christian minorities.

Consider the administration’s handling of recent events in Egypt. Although former president Hosni Mubarak was the United States’ central ally in the Middle East for thirty years, the Obama administration made it a point to throw him under the bus soon after protests began against

him. Again, it was one thing for the mainstream media to portray the Arab Spring in glowing terms, but quite another thing entirely for the White House—which is privy to the best intelligence and area expertise—to go along lock, stock, and barrel with this narrative. After all, there was a reason why former U.S. administrations were supportive of autocrats like Mubarak: they knew that the alternative would be Islamists, who are as bad for U.S. interests as they are for religious minorities. This has been confirmed by recent events in Egypt, where many Egyptians—including a great many who had voted for Morsi—are rising up against him and his Islamist agenda, only to be brutally suppressed by the state, with validations by Islamic fatwas demonizing and permitting the slaying of those who resist Morsi.²⁵

Next, the Obama administration supported a Muslim Brotherhood leader, Muhammad Morsi, now President of Egypt, while overlooking the Brotherhood's decades-long history of working to impose Sharia on Egypt—not to mention their fatwa calling for Coptic churches' destruction. Sayyid Qutb, the "godfather" of modern-day jihad, who highlighted the need to subjugate the non-Muslim world, was a Brotherhood leader. Senior Muslim Brotherhood officials still admit their goal is to resurrect the caliphate; they tend to say things on live TV such as, "Yes, one of these days, we [Muslim Brotherhood] will be masters of the world."²⁶ President Morsi himself, during the presidential elections, publicly recited the Muslim Brotherhood's motto, "The Koran is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader, jihad is our path and death in the name of Allah is our goal"²⁷—a motto that any "martyrdom-seeking" jihadi would be proud of. Despite all this, in February 2011, to justify the administration's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper described the Muslim Brotherhood as "largely secular."²⁸

The administration has even gone so far as to invite to the White House a member of the notorious al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya.²⁹ This is an organization designated "terrorist" by the U.S. government, not least for its role in the aforementioned Luxor Massacre and its countless terror attacks on Egypt's Copts stretching back to the 1970s. On the other hand,

Christians from the Middle East are sometimes banned access to the White House. On November 22, 2011, the Beirut Arabic-language news agency al-Nashara reported that, at the request of the Muslim Brotherhood, Dalia Mogahed canceled a planned meeting between Obama and the Christian Maronite patriarch of Lebanon.³⁰ Mogahed, an observant Muslim who wears the hijab, was personally selected by Obama to serve as an advisor on, ironically, the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.³¹

The Obama administration has even intervened militarily to help Islamist forces. The most obvious example is Libya. After U.S. forces helped Islamic rebels in Libya to assume power—or, in the words of an *Examiner* headline, “U.S. supports Al Qaeda ‘freedom fighters’ against Gaddafi in Libyan civil war”³²—the thanks the U.S. received was an al-Qaeda attack on the American consulate in Benghazi and the murders of four American officials, including Ambassador Chris Stevens. To hide the fact that the al-Qaeda rebels whom the Obama administration empowered in Libya were behind this terrorist attack, the administration tried to frame the attack as a response to a YouTube movie about the prophet of Islam.

Yet the day before the attacks on U.S. missions (including the U.S. embassy in Cairo) began, I had, based on Arabic reports, exposed the fact that al-Qaeda-connected Islamists were threatening to attack American embassies unless the U.S. released the “Blind Sheikh” and other imprisoned jihadis.³³ One Arabic report I cited appeared a full three days before the attacks began on September 11, 2012—a premeditated date chosen deliberately. But the mainstream media did not pick up on any of this; the attacks were portrayed as unexpected and impromptu, and all blame was attributed to Youtube moviemakers living in the United States. The Obama administration was only too happy to endorse this narrative, despite all the independent intelligence it had otherwise.

The true nature of Libya’s “liberation” is becoming ever clearer. Most recently, in late February 2013, reports appeared of Christians, including one man holding dual U.S. and Swedish citizenship, being arrested on proselytism charges. Then some one hundred Christian Copts from

Egypt, most of them trying to work in Libya, were also arrested and tortured by the nation's Sharia-supporters ("Ansar al-Sharia") for possessing Bibles. Among other abuse, their heads were shaven and some who wore the Coptic wrist tattoo had it painfully removed with acid. One Christian man, Ezzat Hakim Atallah, died.

Interestingly, Obama had earlier justified U.S. military intervention in Libya primarily on humanitarian grounds. In his March 28, 2011, speech, he spoke of "our responsibilities to our fellow human beings," adding that not assisting them "would have been a betrayal of who we are." The administration has used this same humanitarian argument to support Syria's rebels, a great many of whom, as we have already seen, are jihadis—including al-Qaeda members—decimating Syria's Christian population.³⁴

On the other hand, the Obama administration has exhibited no concern for "our responsibilities to our fellow human beings" in cases where Muslim regimes slaughter Christians. For example, after the Egyptian military massacred Christian Copts in Maspero, running them over with armored vehicles, the White House responded by saying, "Now is a time for restraint on all sides"—as if Egypt's beleaguered and unarmed Christian minority needs to "restrain" itself against the nation's military.³⁵

In short, the flipside of the Obama administration's support for its Islamist allies has been a lack of U.S. support for the Islamists' enemies, or, more properly, victims—chief among them, Christian minorities. For example, according to a June 7, 2012, CNS report,

The U.S. State Department removed the sections covering religious freedom from the Country Reports on Human Rights that it released on May 24, three months past the statutory deadline Congress set for the release of these reports. The new human rights reports—purged of the sections that discuss the status of religious freedom in each of the countries covered—are also the human rights reports that include the period that covered the Arab Spring and its aftermath. Thus, the reports do not provide in-depth coverage of what has

*happened to Christians and other religious minorities in predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East that saw the rise of revolutionary movements in 2011 in which Islamist forces played an instrumental role. For the first time ever, the State Department simply eliminated the section of religious freedom in its reports covering 2011 and instead referred the public to the 2010 International Religious Freedom Report—a full two years behind the times—or to the annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which was released last September and covers events in 2010 but not 2011. [Emphasis added.]*³⁶

The CNS story goes on to quote several U.S. officials questioning the motives of the Obama administration. Former U.S. diplomat Thomas Farr said that he has “observed during the three-and-a-half years of the Obama administration that the issue of religious freedom has been distinctly downplayed.” Leonard Leo, former chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, said, “to have pulled religious freedom out of it [the report] means that fewer people will obtain information,” so that “you don’t have the whole picture.”

Of course, this would not be the first time that the Obama administration has censored information related to Islam. In October 2011 the administration announced it was “pulling back all training materials used for the law enforcement and national security communities, in order to eliminate all references to Islam that some Muslim groups have claimed are offensive.” In the words of U.S. Attorney Dwight C. Holton, “I want to be perfectly clear about this: training materials that portray Islam as a religion of violence or with a tendency towards violence are wrong, they are offensive, and they are contrary to everything that this president, this attorney general and Department of Justice stands for. . . . They will not be tolerated.”³⁷

This move has crippled U.S. intelligence concerning Islamic threats. Moreover, it has led to some surreal moments, when the administration’s party line—that there is absolutely no connection between Islam and

violence—bumps up against reality. For example, during a congressional hearing on extremism in December 2011, the Homeland Defense department's Paul Stockton refused to associate Islamic terrorists with Islam in any way, shape, or form, regardless of "any set of qualifiers"; he would not even agree that al-Qaeda is following a "distorted" or "perverted" version of Islam. When Representative Dan Lungren repeatedly asked Stockton if he would at least concede that al-Qaeda "is acting out violent Islamist extremism," Stockton continued to refuse, insisting that the group merely consists of "murderers," as a visibly stunned Lungren and others looked on.³⁸

A Newsmax article titled "Obama Overlooks Christian Persecution" gives more examples of State Department indifference "regarding the New Years' murders of Coptic Christians in Egypt and the ravaging of a cathedral." The State Department under Hillary Clinton "refused to list Egypt as 'a country of particular concern,' even as Christians and others were being murdered, churches destroyed, and girls kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam"—despite the fact that the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom, an independent and bipartisan federal government commission, had recommended that the State Department do so.³⁹

Indeed, in the State Department's Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, last released in September 2011, neither Egypt nor Pakistan was among the "Countries of Particular Concern"—defined by the State Department as countries that are the "worst violators of religious freedom"—even though the State Department's own report "stated that Pakistani law calls for the death penalty for people who commit 'blasphemy' against Islam or convert from Islam to another religion." The report even actually "listed multiple instances of the Pakistani government using the law to persecute Christians"⁴⁰—yet Pakistan still was not deemed a country of particular concern.

This is not surprising considering that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who was personally responsible for classifying countries with the "of particular concern" label, believes all religions are equally prone to

violence. As for Muslim violence, her biggest “worry” is that it sometimes targets other Muslims—not that it frequently targets non-Muslims:

Religions against one another, it is even within religions, within Christianity, within Judaism within, oh, Islam, within Hinduism there are people who believe their version of that religion is the only right way to believe. And so in some of the countries that we are concerned about that are majority Muslim countries *it's the intimidation and violence against Muslims who are in minority sects that we most worry about.* [Emphasis added.]⁴¹

Indeed, Muslim clerics regularly taunt Christian minorities with the indifference—at best—of America and the West. For example, Egyptian cleric Sheikh Wagdi Ghoneim recently posted an online video in which, after accusing Egypt's Christian Copts of playing a major role in the December 2012 protests against Islamist President Morsi, he threatened them with genocide, sarcastically adding, “What do you think—that America will protect you? Let's be very clear, America will not protect you. If so, it would have protected the Christians of Iraq when they were being butchered!”⁴²

When some concerned members of Congress tried to create a special envoy for religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia, and their legislation passed the House by a huge margin, Democrat senator James Webb put a hold on it and prevented it from passing.⁴³

Before the bill died, “Representative Frank Wolf said he ‘cannot understand why’ the hold had been placed on a bill that might help Coptic Christians and other groups ‘who face daily persecution, hardship, violence, instability and even death.’” The ultimate source of opposition was the State Department, which had told Webb, “we oppose the bill as it infringes on the Secretary's [Hillary Clinton's] flexibility to make appropriate staffing decisions,” adding that the “the new special envoy position is unnecessary, duplicative, and likely counterproductive.”⁴⁴

But as Wolf responded, “If I believed that religious minorities, especially in these strategic regions, were getting the attention warranted at the State Department, I would cease in pressing for passage of this legislation.... Sadly, that is far from being the case. We must act now.... Time is running out.”⁴⁵

Speakers at Coptic Solidarity’s third annual conference in Washington, D.C., in June 2012—featuring several concerned lawmakers, including the United Kingdom’s Lord Alton, Senator Roy Blunt, Congressman Trent Frank, Congressman Joseph Pitts, and Frank Wolf himself⁴⁶—were clear that Hillary Clinton was ultimately behind the killing of the bill.

That conference also shed light on the fact that even outside the context of the “Arab Spring,” the position of the Obama administration has been see-no-Christian-persecution-by-Muslims. Nigerian lawyer Emmanuel Ogebe described the sheer carnage of thousands of Christians at the hands of Muslim militants and lamented that the Obama administration’s response was to pressure the Christian president of Nigeria to make more concessions—including building more mosques (the very places that “radicalize” Muslims against “infidel” Christians).⁴⁷

The “Arab Spring” is not applicable to Nigeria. But despite Boko Haram’s self-declared goal of cleansing Nigeria of all Christian presence—and the countless churches intentionally bombed and burned, and thousands of Christians intentionally slaughtered, as recounted in the pages above—the Obama administration still refuses to designate the group as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO),” even as several U.S. politicians and NGOs pressure it to do so.⁴⁸

Instead, in May 2012, the administration agreed to spend \$600 million on a USAID initiative launched to ascertain the “true causes” behind Boko Haram’s jihad⁴⁹—as if the organization has not been perfectly clear about its goals: the enforcement of Sharia law and elimination (or at least subjugation) of all infidels, chief among them Christians. The group has voiced its Islamic supremacism countless times and under many formulations. For example, in August 2012, Boko Haram leader Abu Bakar Shekau appeared on video ordering Nigeria’s Christian president Goodluck Jonathan to “repent and forsake Christianity,” that is, convert to Islam; otherwise the jihad—which began in earnest after Jonathan, a

Christian, won Nigeria's fairest presidential elections to date—would continue.⁵⁰

The fact that Boko Haram's motives are clear-cut and obviously religious (according to Sharia, a non-Muslim like Jonathan may not rule over Muslims) has not stopped the Obama administration from pointing to anything and everything else to explain the violence in Nigeria. The very next day after Boko Haram bombed Christian churches celebrating Easter in April 2012, killing dozens, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson stressed that "religion is not driving extremist violence either in Jos or northern Nigeria [where churches were and continue to be bombed]." ⁵¹

As far as former U.S. president Bill Clinton is concerned, "inequality" and "poverty" are "what's fueling all this stuff"—a reference to Boko Haram's jihad to enforce Sharia and eliminate Christians. Clinton further called on Nigerians to "embrace their similarities," adding, "It is almost impossible to cure a problem based on violence with violence" ⁵²—apparently a suggestion that Nigeria's government not retaliate with any severity in response to Boko Haram's mass murderers.

There is a final point to be made concerning Barrack Hussein Obama, the man. Based on his own personal background—an education in the Islamic schools or *madrassas*⁵³ of Indonesia and a Muslim father from Kenya, both of which nations have figured prominently in this book—he of all U.S. presidents should be more sensitive to, or at least more cognizant of, the realities of Christian suffering under Islam. And yet, of all U.S. presidents, his policies have done the most not only to ignore but to enable their suffering, especially through his unqualified support for Islamists in the guise of the "Arab Spring," which former presidential candidate Newt Gingrich called "such a total grotesque failure," correctly referring to it as an "anti-Christian spring." ⁵⁴

The same mainstream media obfuscation of and governmental indifference to the Muslim persecution of Christians also prevails in Europe. In October 2011, Ann Widdecombe, a conservative British politician, criticized the U.K.'s obvious double standard: "David Cameron's government have threatened to cut the overseas aid budget for countries which persecute homosexuals.... Fair enough. But what about Christians?"

When do we qualify for such protection or don't we? ... You stand a better chance of earnest representation [in the U.K.] if you are a hedgehog [than a Christian]." Among other things, she pointed out that U.K. aid to Pakistan—where countless Christian and other minorities are imprisoned on (mostly false) charges of "blasphemy"—will double even as the U.K. cut aid to Malawi because "two homosexual men were sentenced to 14 years of hard labor" there.⁵⁵

The United Nations' assiduous avoidance of any talk of Christian persecution has also occasioned some surreal moments. In July 2012, for example, Fox News reported, "The UN's newest candidate to sit on the Human Rights Council is led by an African strongman accused of genocide by the world body's top war crimes court. Sudan, led by President Omar al-Bashir [responsible for a genocide that saw millions killed in Khartoum's bid to enforce Sharia law], is set to join what the UN bills as its foremost arbiter of human rights abuses, in just the latest absurd example of the [*sic*] a UN selection process that repeatedly places rogue states in global leadership positions." As one observer pointed out, "Electing Sudan to the UN body mandated to promote and protect human rights worldwide is like putting Jack the Ripper in charge of a women's shelter. ... But it's the way the UN works."⁵⁶

The mainstream media and the Western political establishment have shown themselves unable or unwilling to accept the admitted motivation of Islamic groups around the world—namely, the establishment of Sharia, which is distinctly hostile to non-Muslims. They are simply unable to factor ideological, religious, or existential motives into their thinking about violence around the world. Instead they see only material motives (money, land, politics, and so forth). Their almost instinctive conclusion is that Muslim violence is proof positive of legitimate Muslim grievance. These attitudes are so ingrained that they have eroded the influence of Western civilization and its capacity to act.

But is this true of Western Christians, as well? Are they also part of this paradigm—blind or indifferent to the sufferings of their coreligionists

around the world? While it might be expected that secular media and politicians would turn a blind eye to Christian persecution, are Western Christians also indifferent?

Some Western Christians, to be sure, do sympathize with their fellow Christians living under the threat of Muslim violence. Western Christians of all denominations do seek to ameliorate this growing humanitarian crisis. And considering that nearly 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christians,⁵⁷ they are in a very strong position to influence the sort of policies their elected representatives enact.

Yet this crisis is a priority for only a small minority of American Christians. It seems that by and large Christians in the U.S. accept the mainstream narrative. They hear the same message that is drummed into the ears of all Americans—that historically Christians are the intolerant group, responsible for untold sufferings around the world, and they should take the log out of their own eye before they presume to take the speck out of their brother's. Such a misreading of the situation has clearly infiltrated and contaminated the worldview of many American Christians, and particularly of their leaders, causing them either not to see or to be embarrassed to talk about the reality of global Christian persecution. According to a November 2011 survey, while three out of four American Christians have expressed a desire to learn more about the persecuted church, half of America's pastors refuse to mention it.⁵⁸

When German chancellor Angela Merkel stated the fact that Christianity is “the most persecuted religion worldwide,” she was strongly condemned by many lawmakers and even human rights organizations.⁵⁹ The pressure to refrain from mentioning uncomfortable facts about the persecution of Christians is enormous. Little wonder that so many Christian leaders are reluctant to speak about persecution, even when most of their flock wish to hear about it.

Even something as minimal as instituting a short prayer for persecuted Christians, a practice that would at least increase awareness of the situation, is shunned. After all, such a prayer would raise uncomfortable questions—such as who is primarily behind this persecution, and why—that few American Christian leaders want to confront. Commenting on

the general lethargy and apathy that reigns in many American Christian churches, Open Doors USA president Dr. Carl Moeller recently said,

We would think of the American church as a napping church and that we would elbow it and it would wake up and rouse itself and do something [about the persecution of Christians].... In my mind today, the picture I have is a church in a diabetic coma that has gorged itself on the sweets of affluence, materialism, and the idolatry of worshipping the materialistic world. That diabetic coma is now life threatening. We as a church are at the point of death—not the church in the Middle East. We are the ones who can no longer rouse ourselves to even pray for an hour on behalf of things that God would have us pray for.⁶⁰

Some have suggested that American Protestants and Catholics are indifferent to the sufferings of persecuted Christians around the world because of sectarian differences—because they do not see such Christians as Christians. This argument overlooks the fact that, while most indigenous Christians in the Middle East are Orthodox, the majority of the 100 million Christians (at least) being persecuted around the world are either Protestant or Catholic. As a matter of fact, many of them belong to Christian populations whom Protestant and Catholic missionaries from the West originally proselytized. Sadly, we have a situation where Western Christians go to Islamic lands, convert Muslims to Christianity, and then turn their backs on them when they get persecuted for being Christians. In any case, all sectarian and semantic differences aside, all Christians around the world are suffering first and foremost for their belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God—the cornerstone of all Christian theology, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant.

In fact, the argument that American Christians are indifferent to the sufferings of global Christians because of sectarian differences is wholly invalid. After all, American Christians habitually evoke the human rights of non-Christians—particularly non-Christians for whom the mainstream media has approved the status of “persecuted”—even when these same

non-Christians themselves persecute the Christian minorities in their midst. For example, in October 2012, fifteen leaders from U.S. Christian denominations—mostly Protestant, including the Lutherans, the Methodists, and the United Church of Christ, denominations that rarely if ever mention Christian persecution—asked Congress to reevaluate U.S. military aid to Israel, since “military aid will only serve to sustain the status quo and Israel’s military occupation of the Palestinian territories.” In other words, U.S. military aid will contribute to the oppression of the Palestinians, most of whom are Muslims, and some of whom persecute the Christian minorities in their midst.

In response, the American Jewish Committee, “outraged by the Christian leaders’ call,” got it right when they pointed out that, at a time “When religious liberty and safety of Christians across the Middle East are threatened by the repercussions of the Arab Spring, these Christian leaders have chosen to initiate a polemic against Israel, a country that protects religious freedom and expression for Christians, Muslims and others.”⁶¹

It is simply not popular to talk about Christian persecution—even from the pulpits of America’s churches. Better to express Christian compassion for anyone and everyone other than fellow Christians. Just as most liberal Americans strive to disassociate themselves from their European heritage—seeing it as the root of all evil, eagerly championing the rights of non-whites—many liberal American Christians also strive to disassociate themselves from their Christian heritage, eagerly championing the rights of anyone and everyone other than their coreligionists. Hence Americans are concerned for Muslim Palestinians—even as the few remaining Christians under Palestinian Authority continue to be oppressed, especially by Hamas.⁶²

Even so, there is one urgent reason that the West in its entirety—Christians and non-Christians, liberals and conservatives, deists and atheists—should take note of and respond to Muslim persecution of Christians: *it is a reflection of what Islam has in store for them.* While

this book has focused on Christians under Islam, there should be no mistake that the same treatment is in store for *all* non-Muslims wherever and whenever Muslims achieve hegemony. Christians are only the most obvious victims, for the various reasons discussed earlier—including that they are the largest religious minority group under Islam, and the most prone to fall afoul of Islam's laws against basic human freedoms. Fundamentally, however, the sufferings of such Christians are a reflection of Islam's global approach to non-Muslims under its control—a reminder of how Islam behaves when it is in power, on its own home turf, untrammelled by outside influences.

In other words, the West must learn to connect the dots and understand the interconnectivity of Islam, which has been a major theme of this book. The fundamental reason for Muslim hostility to Christians is that they are non-Muslims, *infidels*, and Islam's Sharia—its way—calls for subjugating *all* infidels. To ignore this fact, or, worse, to empower Islam—whether through mainstream media dissembling or Western policies in support of the “Arab Spring”—is not only to perpetuate the sufferings of Christians and others under Islam. It is also to prepare the way for the West's own demise. Islamists around the world are still working to fulfill the Muslim mission that began nearly 1,400 years ago: global hegemony. As a Christian patriarch in Syria put it, after pointing out that the slaughter and displacement of Syria's Christian population is the work of jihadis, “The jihadis will not stop here, the war will spread to Europe. What will England be like in ten or 15 years?”⁶³ Indeed, the Islamic jihad knows no bounds, nor is it a respecter of anything or anyone non-Islamic.

The return of the persecution of Christians under Islam is the most visible aspect of a larger and more dangerous phenomenon: the return of Islam as a global force. The West ignores those being crucified again at its own peril—bringing to memory the words of German pastor Martin Niemöller, who came to understand—but only after being sent to a concentration camp during World War II—what it meant to face a totalitarian ideology hostile to all who reject it:

First they [the Nazis] came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for

the socialists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a Catholic. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.



NOTES

A NOTE TO THE READER

1. Many top officials from the Coptic Orthodox Church assert unequivocally that there are more than 16 million Copts in Egypt (without counting the many secret apostates or non-Coptic Christians). Recently, human rights activist Naguib Ghobrial insisted that there are 16.5 million Copts in Egypt and an additional 3 million Copts living abroad—and that the Coptic Church has all the necessary documentation to prove these figures. Ghobrial was responding to the Egyptian government’s minimizing the Coptic population of Egypt, claiming there are only 3 million Copts in the country in order to justify their lack of representation in the government. Arabic-language video of the interview, “Ghobrial: Number of Copts in Egypt is 6 ½ Million” (translation by the author) is available at wafd-news, September 27, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqQ0EZ9e0nI>.
2. Raymond Ibrahim, “Saudi Grand Mufti Calls for ‘Destruction of All Churches in Region,’” Jihad Watch, March 14, 2012, <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/03/raymond-ibrahim-saudi-grand-mufti-calls-for-destruction-of-all-churches-in-region.html>.

PART ONE: LOST HISTORY

1. Tom Heneghan, "About 100 million Christians persecuted around the world: report," Reuters, January 8, 2012, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/01/08/us-religion-christianity-persecution-idINBRE9070TB20130108>.
2. "200 million Christians in 60 countries subject to persecution," Catholic News Agency, June 19, 2007, http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/200_million_christians_in_60_countries_subject_to_persecution/.
3. "SOCIOLOGIST: EVERY 5 MINUTES A CHRISTIAN IS MARTYRED," ZENIT, June 3, 2011, <http://www.zenit.org/rssenglish-32747>.
4. See 2013 World Watch List, <http://www.worldwatchlist.us/>.
5. The word itself is etymologically connected to the meaning of "way" or "path." For example, the Arabic word for "street" or "roadway" is *shaar*.
6. Islam's military prowess began to wane in the late sixteenth century, especially after the Christian victory against the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, but general Muslim confidence in the might of Islam was not humbled until the nineteenth century. After all, there was no Internet to disseminate the news of Lepanto.
7. Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1939), 166.
8. *Ibid.*, 9, 185.
9. Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 126.
10. Of course, one may argue—as Islam's apologists habitually do—that the Crusades were the first successful "imperialistic" venture to conquer Muslim lands. However, the Crusades did not impress the power of the West on the Islamic world as the events of the colonial era did. During the Crusades, only one small strip of land including Jerusalem was held by the Christians for any lengthy period of time (two centuries), whereas during the colonial era, practically the entire Muslim world, from Morocco to Indonesia, was subjugated by European powers.
11. Theodore Hall Patrick, *Traditional Egyptian Christianity: A History of the Coptic Orthodox Church* (Greensboro: Fisher Park Press, 1996), 120.
12. Transcript of Osama bin Laden Tape, ABC News, December 13, 2001, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/BIN112A.html>.
13. Sacrosanct because the Koran is written in Arabic, the celestial language of Allah and the angels.
14. Raymond Ibrahim, "Lessons on the Long Road to Hijab," Raymond Ibrahim: Islam Translated, December 28, 2011, <http://www.raymondibrahim.com/from-the-arab-world/lessons-on-the-long-road-to-hijab/>.
15. And even those who wore it, mostly rural women—in all civilizations, it is the rural folk who are most resistant to outside change—wore it for traditional reasons, not as a show of compliance to Islam.

16. Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2010), 167.
17. Samuel M. Zwemer, *The Law of Apostasy in Islam: Answering the Question Why There are So Few Moslem Converts, and Giving Examples of Their Moral Courage and Martyrdom* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1916), 157.
18. Theodore Hall Patrick, *Traditional Egyptian Christianity: A History of the Coptic Orthodox Church* (Greensboro: Fisher Park Press, 1996), 134.
19. *Ibid.*, 20, 148.
20. Keith Roderick, "What Will the Wise Men Bring to Bethlehem," *National Review Online*, December 20, 2006, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/219529/what-will-wise-men-bring-bethlehem/keith-roderick>.
21. Luiza Oleszczuk, "Christians could disappear from Iraq and Afghanistan," *Christian Post*, December 30, 2011, <http://in.christiantoday.com/articles/christians-could-disappear-from-iraq-and-afghanistan/6919.htm>.
22. Such as Hassan al-Bana, the Egyptian who founded the Muslim Brotherhood—today the world's largest and most influential Islamic organization—back in 1928.
23. "NASA Chief: Next Frontier Better Relations With Muslim World," *Fox News*, July 5, 2010, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/07/05/nasa-chief-frontier-better-relations-muslims/>.
24. Tawfik Hamid, *Inside Jihad: Understanding and Confronting Radical Islam* (Top Executive Media, 2006), 178.
25. Patrick, *Traditional Egyptian Christianity*, 148.
26. David Bukay, "Peace or Jihad? Abrogation in Islam," *Middle East Quarterly* XIV, no. 4 (2007): 3–11, <http://www.meforum.org/1754/peace-or-jihad-abrogation-in-islam>.
27. "Sahih Muslim Book 019, Hadith Number 4294," *Hadith Collection*, <http://www.hadithcollection.com/sahihmuslim/147-Sahih%20Muslim%20Book%2019.%20Jihad%20and%20Expedition/12807-sahih-muslim-book-019-hadith-number-4294.html>.
28. Ibn al-Hajjaj Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, C9B1N31. See also Muhammad Ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Lahore: Kazi, 1979), B2N24.
29. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, (New York: Pantheon, 1958), vol. 1, 473.
30. Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 60.
31. Ahmed Mahmud Karima, *Al-Jihad fi'l-Islam: Dirasa Fiqhiya Muqarina* (Cairo: Al-Azhar University, 2003), translation by the author.
32. Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2010), 56.
33. Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity*, 79.

34. Mark Durie, *The Third Choice: Islam, Dhimmitude, and Freedom* (Australia: Deror Books, 2010), 134–135.
35. “Paying Jizyah is a Sign of Kufr and Disgrace,” *Qtafsir*, n.d., http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2566&Itemid=64.
36. Although the Shia do not have a favorable view of Caliph Omar—or of any of mainstream Islam’s “righteous caliphs”—they do follow the same Koran, including the aforementioned verses that are hostile to Christianity, and Christians have also suffered under Shia domination. One of the worst periods of Christian persecution covered in this book was initiated by the Fatimid caliph Hakim bi-Amr Allah, who is still revered in some Shia sects.
37. Ibn Qayyim, *Abkam Ahl al-Dhimma* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2002), vol. 2, 115, translation by the author.
38. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 113–114.
39. Durie, *The Third Choice*, 40, 141–146.
40. Robert Spencer, *Muslim Persecution of Christians* (Sherman Oaks: David Horowitz Freedom Center, 2011), 41–42.

PART TWO: ISLAM’S WAR ON CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

1. Ibn Qayyim, *Abkam Ahl al-Dhimma* (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, 2002), vol. 2, 115, translation by the author.
2. One of the most significant events in modern Turkey’s attempt to secularize—at the time when Muslims widely believed that success and Western-style secularization went hand in hand—was the transformation of the Hagia Sophia into a museum. And one of the most significant signs of recent times, marking Turkey’s retreat from secularization and return to Islam, is the fact that many Turks are demanding that the Hagia Sophia be turned back into a mosque. In June 2012, to mark the five-hundred-and-fifty-ninth anniversary of the Islamic conquest of Constantinople, thousands of Turks prayed outside the Hagia Sophia shouting “Allahu Akbar!” and demanding the building be re-opened as a mosque in honor of the jihadi sultan who conquered this onetime distinctly Christian nation. For more on Islam and the Hagia Sophia see Raymond Ibrahim, “Greatest Church Soon To Be Mega Mosque?,” Raymond Ibrahim: Islam Translated, June 8, 2012, <http://www.raymondibrahim.com/islam/greatest-church-soon-to-be-mega-mosque/>.
3. Ismail bin Muhammad al-Ansari, *Hikm Bina’ al-Kina’is wa al-Ma’abid al-Shirkaya fi Bilad al-Muslimin* [*Ruling on Building Churches and Polytheistic Temples in Muslim Countries*], IslamHouse, April 13, 2008, <http://www.islamhouse.com/p/107604>, translation by the author.
4. Raymond Ibrahim, “Saudi Grand Mufti Calls for ‘Destruction of All Churches in Region,’” Jihad Watch, March 14, 2012, <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/03/>

- raymond-ibrahim-saudi-grand-mufti-calls-for-destruction-of-all-churches-in-region.html.
5. al-Ansarai, *Ruling on Building Churches*.
 6. Nasir bin Muhammad al-Ahmed, "Bina' al-Kina'is fi Bilad al-Muslimin [Building Churches in Muslim Lands]," Alahmad, 2008, <http://alahmad.com/node/772>, translation by the author.
 7. Abdullah bin Mohammed Ezkil, "In Response to Sheikh Dr. Qaradawi: Banning the Building of Churches has Consensus," Saa'id, <http://www.saa'id.net/Doat/Zugail/428.htm>, translation by the author.
 8. Ibn Qayyim, "Ihkam ahl-al-dhimma [Rulings Concerning Dhimmis]," Islamweb, section 1195, 1997, http://www.islamweb.net/newlibrary/display_book.php?bk_no=105&ID=235&cidfrom=226&cidto=301&bookid=105&startno=5, translation by the author. ""
 9. Ibn Taymiyya, "Hikm Hadam al-Kana'is [Ruling on Destroying Churches]," tawhed, <http://www.tawhed.ws/pr?i=6472>, translation by the author.
 10. Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2010), 84–85.
 11. Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 11.
 12. Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 91.
 13. Taqi Ed-Din El-Maqrizi, *A Short History of the Copts and Their Church*, trans. S. C. Malan (London: D. Nutt, 1873), 86.
 14. Ibn Warraq, "Islam and the Crusades," *City Journal* 19, no. 4 (2009), <http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/history/world/wh0150.htm>.
 15. El-Maqrizi, *A Short History of the Copts*, *op. cit.*, 10.
 16. Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude*, 7.
 17. For more on the role of violence in Islam and Christianity, including a comparison of the jihad and the Crusades, see Raymond Ibrahim, "Are Judaism and Christianity as Violent as Islam?" *Middle East Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (2009), 3–12, <http://www.meforum.org/2159/are-judaism-and-christianity-as-violent-as-islam>.
 18. Edward Peters, ed., "Speech of Urban—Robert of Rheims," *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 27.
 19. Taqi Ed-Din El-Maqrizi, *A Short History of the Copts and Their Church*, trans. S. C. Malan (London: D. Nutt, 1873), 77.
 20. *Ibid.*, 16, 79–80.
 21. *Ibid.*, 16, 86.
 22. *Ibid.*, 16, 87.
 23. In the original Arabic text of Maqrizi, the number is 30,000. Apparently the incredulous translator thought an extra zero was added as a typo, and concluded that the number was really 3,000. However, based on early Christian texts, the

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the same category. *Musnad Ibn Hanbal* (vol. 2, p. 2992), for example, records Muhammad saying “Women, dogs, and donkeys annul a man’s prayer.” Indeed, in Qurtubi’s same *Tafsir* (vol.15, p. 172), after examining such hadiths, he writes, “A Woman may be likened to a sheep—even a cow or a camel—for all are ridden.”

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PART FIVE: SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL

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